THE WAY OF THE WORLD

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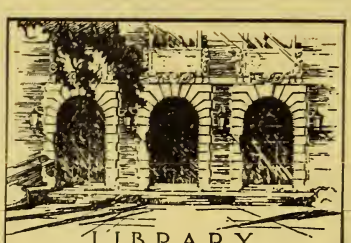

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THE WAY OF THE WORLD

BY

DAVID CHRISTIE MURRAY

AUTHOR OF "HEARTS," "JOSEPH'S COAT," "COALS OF FIRE," ETC.

A NEW EDITION

London

CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1889

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THE WAY OF THE WORLD.

CHAPTER I.

A YOUNG man was leaving home and the widowed mother who had made the shabby house homely. He was a very small young man in stature, but rather above the average height in courage, and he believed in himself profoundly. He had as yet failed to decide about the future, except in a general way, and only time could tell whether he would be a London Editor, Prime Minister, or Lord Chief Justice. He was a very small young man indeed, but his hair rose high above a clever-looking face and a compact big head, and his carriage did what it could to atone for the brevity of his figure. He had eyes of singular keenness, but no depth, and he faced the world with a heart full of pluck and cheek and self-importance. What with his aspect of alert impudence and courage, his exceeding smallness of body and the upstanding hair which crowned his head like the cropped comb of a fighting cock, he was prodigiously like a bantam.

A dingy room in a dingy house was the scene of the only farewell the small young man had to offer. The widowed mother was as faded as the furniture, and her drooping air contrasted strangely with the fearless promise of success which was blazoned on her son's face and figure. There was a musty smell in the room,—traceable to the little front shop on which it opened, where the packets of haberdashery on the skimpy shelves had somehow a fatal look of never being untied. The gauze of the smartest cap in the widow's window had lost its crispness, and its artificial flowers had reached an artificial autumn, and looked bedraggled and forlorn. The very painted letters above the window seemed to have faded out of shamefacedness, and

announced the name they spelled in a sort of husky lettered whisper. MRS. AMELIA was the name painted on the wrinkled scrap of boarding over the shop window, and Mrs. Amelia was the widowed mother who cried at the farewells of the very small young man.

"Don't take on, mother," he said, in a crisp, loud voice. "Ten shillings a week will be a help to you, and I can afford that. I can live on thirty. And whatever increase of salary I get, you profit by it; that's a promise. I shall always send a quarter of my income home."

"You're a good son, William," said the widow, drying her eyes—vainly just yet.

"I mean to be," said William alertly.

"But you don't seem sorry to leave home," pursued the widow.

"Sorry?" said the crisp young man. "Of course not. Why *should* I be sorry at having a chance to help myself and mend your circumstances? I should deserve to be kicked if I pretended to be sorry."

"You were born and bred in the house, William," mourned his mother.

"I certainly did labour under those disadvantages," the young man answered. His attitude and the expression of his face showed how much he approved of this retort.

"You might be sorry at leaving it, poor as it is," said the mother.

"I might," returned the young man, "if I were a cat, and capable of contracting unreasonable affections for localities. But, being blessed with brains, I'm not sorry; and, having a conscience, I can't pretend to be."

Thus early in life had Mr. William Amelia learned to despise sentiment. Now the widowed mother would have liked to see a little sentiment infused into his leave-takings. It would have softened the pang of parting if he could have left her a little tenderly. He was a pearl among sons, and had never neglected his duty. She knew how clever he was, and she knew that he had common sense on his side. But a mother's heart is an exigent foolish thing, and somehow common sense is cold comfort for it.

"It's worth while, William," said the faded woman, whose eyes were red with crying, "it's worth while to have some love for a place where you've lived for two-and-twenty years, even if the place *is* shabby."

"It's worth while, mother," he answered with unshaken cheerfulness, "to have a definite sense of duty to one's-self and one's own people. I can't put myself into a grateful attitude and sing 'My humble home, farewell'; but I can make forty shillings a week, and send you ten. If I loved the place I don't suppose I should leave it."

"But you're leaving me as well, William," said the widow, with her apron at her eyes again.

"That's a different thing," said the young man briskly. "If an affection is worth anything, it's PRACTICAL. I'm not going to cry at leaving," and he looked singularly unlike that; "but I'm going to do my duty when I'm gone. The proof of the pudding is the eating of it. Good-bye, mother."

The small young man's voice was loud and hard, and whenever he spoke and whatever he said, there was an air of self-approving smartness about him.

"Good-bye, William," said his mother, embracing him. "God bless you!"

"God bless you," returned the young man, alert and business-like—as a shop-walker calls "Number six—forward!"

Small as he was he looked too big for his portmanteau, assuming it to contain, as it did, his whole possessions. He was eminently respectable in aspect, though his tidy tweed suit and his silk hat had alike been brushed too often to retain their freshness. Every barleycorn of his figure had its full advantage as he walked, and in the clearer light of the streets it was noticeable that the constant tucked-up carriage of his head had creased his cheeks into a line which ran below the chin, and promised, if ever he should grow stout, to make that feature double.

Courage and resolution are fine things, and the world would be a poor place without them. The young man had them in plenty; but after all the world is a big place, and he was such a very small young man that there was some sense of disproportion in the coming battle. And yet, he was really almost as clever as he thought himself, and his life sermon on the great Gospel of Getting-On was likely to be effective. He was as keen as a razor and about as sympathetic. As the result of rare good health and a perfect self-opinion, he was almost always cheerful, though his cheerfulness was sterile and comforted the world no more than the play of light on an icicle. There is no denying that he was well furnished for the progress of a pilgrim whose ultimate bright goal was a booth in Vanity Fair.

Mr. Amelia was a member of the Fourth Estate. In less lofty

language, a newspaper reporter. It is probable that no other business or profession includes within its ranks so varied an array of mental endowments. There are men in that line of life too stupid to be bricklayers, and there are men of surprising learning and the keenest acumen. No other profession offers such a range of high and low employment. The range includes the penny weekly sheet issued at Mudhole-cum-Podger and the daily prints of the great cities. The reporter at Mudhole-cum-Podger is sometimes below his business, even there, and the reporter of the great town or city is often more than master of his work, hard and responsible as it may be. He blossoms in due time into the able editor, he reads for the Bar and becomes a famous pleader, he sits on the woolsack, he writes books and is known all over the world. His origin as reporter is almost a proof of want of riches to begin with. If his parents had had money he would have gone into some recognized profession, or would at least have been bound apprentice. Newspaper reporting is a business in which you may begin very low down indeed. That you cannot spell is scarcely a bar against your aspirations. And through it, and out of it, you can rise to just such heights as your mental endowments fit you to stand on. Ignorance and incapacity need hardly starve in it. Respectable mediocrity can flourish in it, and a man with brains and resolution can make it a stepping-stone to greatness.

Mr. William Amelia entered at the gates of journalism because they were opened to him when other avenues to the land of independent bread and water were closed, but he was not long at the business without reflecting on the chances that lay within it. It was his first ambition to become a parliamentary reporter. What might come when that desire was fulfilled he could not tell. He would at least have planted both feet on the bottom rung of a ladder which had been known already to reach the very zenith of Fame's firmament. Others had mounted as high as the ladder led them. Why not he?

He was bound southwards, to a country town a hundred miles from his birthplace, and geographically as well as professionally he made a stride towards London.

A young man making a new departure in life may be excused if he looks kindly on the dreams Hope spreads before him. If Mr. William Amelia, in his mind's eye, saw himself occupying positions which were unlikely for him, he was less mistaken in his estimate of himself than many men have been before him.

He had never been remarkable for a humble bearing, and

having just administered a severe rebuke to the Prime Minister from his own independent seat below the gangway in a fancy House of Commons he was none the more likely to look submissive now, as he stepped from his third-class compartment to the platform.

"Can you direct me to the office of the *Whig?*"

He put the question to a porter in tones so crisp and clear that an elderly man standing at the little bookstall a dozen yards away turned to look at him, and after a second's pause advanced.

"Excuse me if I am mistaken," said the stranger. "Have I the pleasure of speaking to Mr. Amelia?"

"If it is a pleasure," said the very small young man, "you enjoy it."

The elderly stranger smiled, languidly and innocently, like a tired infant. His dress was threadbare and a little neglected; his hair long, ragged, and inclining to grey.

"My name," he said, "is Rider—John Hawkes Rider. I am the Editor of the *Whig*." There was a mighty contrast between the Editor and the new Chief Reporter. The Editor was a man of evident weak refinement. It was obvious that he had never been a gentleman. Probably he had been a compositor with a taste for reading—local rumour said as much—and a gradual way had been opened for him by the hand of friendly circumstance. He was not at all like the sort of man who makes his own circumstances. "When I heard you asking for the office," he said, "I thought you might be Mr. Amelia." His two thumbs went searching irresolutely in his waistcoat pockets as he spoke. "I'm afraid," he said by-and-bye, "that I haven't a card. But that doesn't matter."

"A stock trick," said Mr. Amelia to himself with a smile. "He says that to everybody."

"Would you like to see the office?" asked the Editor. "You must be tired. Allow me to carry your bag."

Mr. Amelia allowed him, and gave the reins to his own reflections.

The new Chief Reporter of the *Gallowbay Whig* had not read Shelley—he was no great lover of verse—but he knew from observation that man looks before and after, and pines for what is not. He knew that strength and cunning are useful weapons in life's battle-field, and he did not expect to receive quarter or intend to give it. The fancy which showed him his own figure at the editorial desk might be premature without being ridiculous. His own compact big head was compactly filled with brains, and

he knew it; he overflowed with energy and vitality; under his leadership the *Whig* might become a live organ of public opinion instead of the limp invertebrate thing he knew it.

"This is the office, Mr. Amelia," said the Editor; "walk in." He set the portmanteau down before the stationer's counter, and led the way up-stairs into an untidy and dreary room with a tall desk, a couple of tall stools, a table, and two broken chairs for sole furniture. Lounging against the tall desk were two young men, of whom one looked respectable and dull and one seedy and clever.

"This," said the Editor, indicating the respectable young man, "is Mr. Flinch, our second reporter, and this," indicating the seedy one, "is Mr. Kyrle-Maddox, our junior. This is Mr. Amelia, gentlemen, our Chief of Staff." He gave something of a humourous pomposity to this announcement, and rubbed his hands with the air of a man who is pleased with his own pleasantry. The seedy junior laid down a briar-root pipe and shook hands with Mr. Amelia. The respectable second followed suit, though he looked as if the salute went against the grain with him. "This," said the Editor, pushing open a creaking door, "is my own den."

The word described the apartment fairly. Mr. Amelia peered through the doorway and nodded.

"The thunderbolt manufactory?" he said.

"We thunder very mildly here," responded the Editor, groping irresolutely at his waistcoat pockets with his thumbs. "There is very little party-feeling in Gallowbay."

"That's rather a pity, isn't it?" asked Mr. Amelia.

"A pity? Surely not," said the mild Editor, taking off his hat and polishing his head with a crimson cotton handkerchief. "Liberal and Tory, lamb and lion, lie down together here. The county papers never touch politics except at election times, and then they only recommend their several candidates. The *Independent* is the Tory journal in Gallowbay, but it and the *Whig* have nothing to quarrel about."

Mr. Amelia nodded once or twice, but made no verbal response. If the management of the *Whig* should ever come into his hands, he thought he could find reasons enough for warfare. The seedy young man had resumed his pipe, and was smoking like a furnace.

"I'm glad you've turned up," said he, addressing the new chief. "Flinch and I have been filthily overworked since Horner left. Haven't we, Mr. Rider? You'll find us both a little sore at first. Flinch thinks he ought to have been chief—

not that he's fit for it, but human vanity's a comprehensive thing —and I certainly ought to have been second."

Mr. Flinch accepted this in sulky silence, the mild Editor chuckled, and Mr. Amelia looked inquiringly at the seedy junior.

"That was the proprietor's affair, not mine," said the Editor, defensively.

"We know that, sir," said the junior, laughing.

The whole condition of things in the *Whig* office was evidently, to Mr. Amelia's fancy, subversive of discipline. An editor who voluntarily acted as porter on his first introduction to a subordinate, and who allowed himself to be addressed with familiarity by the junior member of his staff, was very far removed from Mr. Amelia's ideas of what an editor should be. It was plain that the junior reporter had been bred in a very bad school.

"We're all here together," said that young gentleman, with blundering friendliness, "and I don't think we can do better than go round to the 'Cow' and have a drink on the strength of it. Not more than others I deserve, yet God has given me more. I have half-a-crown, and it's pay-day to-morrow. You'll come along, Mr. Amelia?"

"No, thank you," said Mr. Amelia, coldly.

"You don't drink?" asked the junior.

"Unless I am thirsty," responded the new chief in his own crisp way.

"Ah!" said the junior; "I couldn't afford that. I'm thirsty too often."

The inoffensive Editor laughed at the junior's repartee, but catching sight of the great disapproval expressed in Mr. Amelia's face, he himself became grave, and expressed a half apology in the feeble chafing of his hands.

"It might be convenient, sir," said the chief, "if Mr. Flinch would go with me through an account of the routine work at once."

"Certainly, if you wish it," said the Editor. "Mr. Flinch." The speaker waved an uncertain right hand with a vaguely disconcerted air, and Mr. Flinch produced a dog's-eared diary, labelled "Engagement Book," and opened it before his superior officer.

"A glass of beer, Mr. Rider?" said the junior, inquiringly.

"Well," said the Editor, still vaguely disconcerted, "while Mr. Flinch explains——"

The junior opened the door and Mr. Rider edged through it.

Mr. Maddox nodded amicably in answer to Mr. Amelia's uplifted gaze, and followed his editor. Mr. Amelia turned his eyes back to the pages of the dog's-eared diary, and began his work in cold scorn. He had been fifth reporter on a big daily journal in the north, and he knew what discipline ought to be.

Mr. Rider and the junior reporter had been absent for perhaps a quarter of an hour, when Mr. Amelia heard a great rush upon the stairs without, and the seedy youth reappeared, out of breath, but still clinging to his pipe and smoking, though with difficulty. Close upon his heels came the Editor, also out of breath, and upon the countenance of each was an expression of high excitement.

"A most extraordinary event has happened," said Mr. Rider, gaspingly. "A thing quite outside the ordinary routine." Mr. Amelia looked keen inquiry, but said nothing. "I shall want to bend all the forces of the office to the task," pursued Mr. Rider, when he had partially recovered breath. "You, Mr. Amelia, will oblige me by going to the 'Windgall Arms,' where you will inquire for Mr. Ragshaw. Give Mr. Amelia a notebook and a pencil, Mr. Flinch. Mr. Ragshaw will tell you all he knows, I have no doubt. You will inquire about the newly-discovered heir to the Gallowbay estates—Mr. Bolsover Kimberley. I shall seek a personal interview with Mr. Kimberley. You, Mr. Maddox, can accompany me, and take a note of the conversation. You, Mr. Flinch, had better walk up to the Woodlands and ask to see Mr. Sheeney—Mr. Clarence G. Sheeney—who will tell you all about the enhanced value of the estates."

"Perhaps," said Mr. Amelia, "I had better know something of the matter beforehand."

"Yes," returned the Editor; "it will be as well. The late owner of the Gallowbay estates was a minor, and an orphan. He had no known relatives, and was believed to be the last of his line, the survivor of his whole race. Messrs. Begg, Batter, and Bagg, solicitors, have discovered a perfect title to the estates. It is vested in the person of Mr. Bolsover Kimberley, who was a solicitor's clerk this morning, at a salary, I should say, of thirty shillings a week. This evening he is worth at least a million and a quarter sterling."

Mr. Rider took off his hat and polished his head with the crimson cotton handkerchief, glancing from one to another of his staff with an almost bewildered air.

"A million and a quarter sterling, gentlemen," he repeated. "A million and a quarter sterling."

"Tidy lump of money, isn't it?" said the junior.

"If ah'd got it," said Mr. Flinch, "ah'd travel."

"To the local asylum," said the junior. "Flinch's intellect," he added, with an explanatory manner, "is constructed to bear a pressure of one shilling a week to the square inch. A thirteen penny pressure would burst it."

"Mr. Maddox," said the Editor, mildly, "you are ungenerous. It has always seemed to me as unmanly to say a cruel clever thing to a man who has no faculty of repartee as it would be to hit a man with his hands tied."

"Or to kick a cripple," returned the junior. "I'm sure I beg your pardon, Flinch. Not that he knows why, sir, and I'm sure he doesn't mind. Do you, Flinch?"

"Ah don't mind," returned Mr. Flinch, surlily. "You can say what you like abaht me."

Mr. Amelia looked sharply from Flinch to Maddox, and from Maddox to Rider, taking mental stock of the three. Flinch was obviously a dullard. Rider was a child, and a very foolish one. Maddox might have some promise in him apart from the bar-lounging fear, but his nails were dirty, his clothes dusty and disordered, his boots unblacked and broken, and his linen and his hair were monuments to neglect. Mr. Amelia resolved that Maddox should be polished. It did not suit him to have a junior so disreputable in aspect. The disreputability would be reflected back upon himself.

"Excuse me," he said, "for breaking in on your conversation, but since there is work to be done might it not be as well to do it? Perhaps Mr. Flinch will direct me to the 'Windgall Arms.'"

"We will meet here and compare notes before anything is written," said the Editor. "I can show you to the Arms, Mr. Amelia. My business lies there as well as yours. On second thoughts, Mr. Amelia, I fancy that it will be more agreeable to Mr. Kimberley in his altered position to encounter a stranger than to meet one who knew him in his humbler sphere. I think that will be a little more thoughtful—more considerate."

He put this doubtfully, as if inviting Mr. Amelia's opinion.

"As you please, sir," returned the new chief.

"I think," said the Editor again, "it will be a little more considerate. Mr. Kimberley is not a—a self-possessed gentleman, and I knew him in less fortunate days, and perhaps the

remembrance of that fact might embarrass him. Our functions," he added with an uncertain smile, "are a little inquisitorial, Mr. Amelia, and we naturally like to make them as little unpleasant as possible." Mr. Amelia returning no answer to this doctrine other than that conveyed in a crisp nod which might mean either assent or its opposite, the Editor once more became vaguely disconcerted, and groped in his pockets without apparent purpose. "You will ask Mr. Kimberley to furnish you with the chief facts of his career, Mr. Amelia, and his intentions for the future. I am afraid you will find him a little embarrassed at first."

With this he edged himself from the room, and the others followed. Mr. Flinch turned up the street to the right and the other three to the left, Mr. Amelia wonderfully erect and self-important, the Editor walking apologetically on a level with him, and the junior with his hands in his pockets and pipe in mouth bringing up the rear.

CHAPTER II.

If you are not anybody in particular—and the chances are that you are not—you are invited to ask yourself one question before pursuing this history. How do you think you would feel if you suddenly became somebody very particular indeed? A little embarrassed, do you think? I fancy so.

Your sympathies are requested for Mr. Bolsover Kimberley, a gentleman embarrassed beyond measure. Perhaps you may be better able to sympathize with him when you know more particularly who he was and how he suffered.

There was a shadowy unsubstantial-seeming Commodore in the Kimberley family legends. This Commodore had fought somewhere, and was reported to have secured a good handful of prize-money. He had bought land, so the legend ran, and had settled on it and flourished exceedingly. Mr. Bolsover Kimberley used sometimes to speak of his ancestor, the Commodore. Bolsover's father had used the phrase before him, and it was generally conceded that it was a reputable sort of thing to have had a Commodore in the family.

Bolsover began life in canary-coloured stockings, blue small

clothes, and a tail-coat which touched his heels as he walked, a pensioner on the bounty of one Harward, who flourished in the days of Elizabeth, and left an annual sum of money for the education of twelve poor boys, and their clothing according to a design held to be reputable in his own day. So Kimberley's earliest memories were of the jeers of the unsympathetic, and (being a boy of great natural meekness and indisposed to popular notice) he suffered grievously through all his school years because of that absurd livery. The other eleven, his compeers, could fight, and being animated by that spirit of brotherhood which is sometimes the offspring of misfortune, they were formidable enough to be left alone. But Bolsover could not fight, and was therefore a Pariah amongst those who should have been his chosen. The history of the chivyings of Kimberley was varied and prolonged enough to furnish forth an epic. His tortures lasted six years, and when he was set free from them and transplanted to a solicitor's office, his native shyness and cowardice were fixed in him for life.

His earlier functions in the solicitor's office were to sweep out the rooms, light the fires and run on errands; but in the fulness of time he became a clerk. He regarded this as the beginning of life in earnest, but he seemed likely to live to the end of his days in the pursuit of labours no more profitable or pretentious.

He was now thirty-five years of age, and honorary secretary to a Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society. He was meek, and had no features to speak of. His hair was unassuming and his whiskers were too shy to curl. His eyebrows—always a little elevated—bore in their troubled curve a nervous apology, "I *hope* I don't intrude." Sometimes at friendly tea-drinkings, when, save himself, there were only ladies present, he could be moved to sing. "I have a silent Sorrow here," "She never told her Love," and "The Lass of Richmond Hill,"—these were his favourite ditties. Their character and his single estate encouraged the belief that he was consumed by a hopeless and unspoken passion. This conjecture, like some stories of the old school, was founded upon fact.

Poor Bolsover burned at times to be rid of his secret, but he felt that he would have been thought no better than a madman if it had once been known. It *was* an undeniable madness in a solicitor's clerk even to dream of loving the Lady Ella Santerre. You may fancy—and fancy is not greatly exercised to compass the exertion—the sentiments which would have filled the girl's heart had she known. Bolsover never troubled himself with

accusations against Fate, because no shadow of Hope's wing ever came within measurable distance of him. He knew perfectly well what a fool he was, but he was in love for all that.

A cat may look at a king. A solicitor's clerk may love an earl's daughter. But he is surely wise to hold his tongue about it, if a creature guilty of so astonishing a folly can be said to be wise at all.

On the morning of that day on which Mr. Amelia arrived in Gallowbay, Bolsover was seated in a little room with a dingy red desk, a dingy red door, and a cobwebbed skylight. A dusty window showed him nothing—when he looked up from the deed he was laboriously engrossing—but a blank wall baking in the dreary and oppressive sunshine. Suddenly a knock sounded on the dingy red door, and the clerk, without looking up from his work, pulled a cord, and cried "Come in." The person who had knocked entered, and illumined the place—Mr. Ragshaw, senior clerk to Messrs. Begg, Batter, and Bagg, the leading firm of solicitors in the county town. Mr. Ragshaw's employers mingled with the county people almost on terms of equality, and Mr. Ragshaw—almost on terms of equality—associated with his employers. He was, therefore, a person of some distinction, and his manner displayed a consciousness of the fact, not too obtrusive. His taste in dress was undeniable. The burning weather justified a departure from the soberer tints of British fashion, and he was attired in trousers of a large plaid, a buff waistcoat, a white hat, a drab dust overcoat thrown open, and a morning coat of blue cloth with a rose in his buttonhole. He displayed cuffs and a shirt-collar besprinkled with dog's heads in pink. He wore cloth boots and white gaiters, and on his breast glittered an opalescent bulb the size of a bronze halfpenny, backed by a wide expanse of scarlet scarf.

Bolsover received his guest with a befitting reverence. He was quite amazed with the gorgeous creature's condescension when Mr. Ragshaw removed his white hat, and, advancing, proffered his right hand.

"My dear Mr. Kimberley," said Mr. Ragshaw, "allow me the honour of shaking hands with you. Permit me, sir, to congratulate you. I believe that I am the first bearer of good news."

Mr. Kimberley held his tongue and turned pale.

"You have doubtless, sir," said Mr. Ragshaw, resuming, "heard frequent mention of what is known as the Gallowbay Estate?"

Bolsover waved his hand towards the deed he had been engrossing a minute before. It related to a portion of the property his visitor had mentioned. Mr. Ragshaw cast an eye about it and then elevated his eyebrows with an expression of genteel surprise.

"At its northern boundary," he continued, "it adjoins Shouldershott Park, the estate of Lord Windgall. It is bounded on the south by the High Street, and includes the whole of the northern side of that thoroughfare. On the west it includes the foreshore, and on the east its boundaries are somewhat more intricate. The leases have all fallen in during the lifetime of its late owner."

Bolsover, paler than before, nodded to signify attention, but still said nothing.

"My firm, sir," pursued the splendid creature, "represented the trustees of the late owner, who inherited the estate in early infancy. He died three months ago at the age of twenty, leaving no known relatives. We instituted a search, sir, which resulted in the discovery of an indisputable title to the estate. Permit me to congratulate you, sir,—the estate is yours."

Bolsover Kimberley laid his hands on the high stool from which he had recently arisen, and held it to steady himself. He gasped, and his voice was harsh.

"How much?"

"The estate, sir," said Mr. Ragshaw, "has almost trebled in value during the long minority of the deceased, and it is now approximately valued at forty-seven thousand per annum."

The owner of the Gallowbay Estate lurched forward and fell over the high stool in a dead faint. The senior clerk of Begg, Batter, and Bagg caught him by the shoulders, held him up, and straightened him.

The family belief in the existence of the Commodore was justified. But so far as the new-made millionnaire had known he had no kith or kin in the world, and he had never expected anybody to leave him anything. In the forgotten language of the Fistic Ring, he was hit all abroad, knocked out of time by this intelligence.

Mr. Ragshaw's attentions restored him to his senses, and he drank a little water and sobbed hysterically.

When he had recovered sufficiently to understand what had happened, he arose weakly from the one office chair, took off his office coat, rolled it up neatly, and put it in his desk. He next detached the desk-key from the ring on which it kept

company with his latch-key and the key of his chest of drawers. Then he put on his walking coat and his hat, and went out, leaving the unfinished deed behind him with the first syllable of the word "consideration" staring at the waste of unwritten parchment which lay beyond it. Mr. Ragshaw accompanied him, writhing his own features into an expression of the deepest sympathy, as the owner of the Gallowbay Estate, still much shaken, walked slowly along the shady side of the street.

"Don't you think, Mr. Kimberley," asked Mr. Ragshaw with profound respect, "that a little something—"

They were outside the "Windgall Arms," and Kimberley understood the half-spoken query.

"Why, yes, sir," said the millionnaire, "but I never keep it in the 'ouse, and having had to pay a tailor's bill this week, I don't happen—"

Mr. Ragshaw spoke with genuine emotion.

"My *dear* sir, allow me!" He ushered Mr. Kimberley through the portal.

"Ow de do, Kimberley?" said the host, who lounged in the cool shadow of the doorway with a cigar between his lips.

Mr. Ragshaw eyed the landlord with some severity.

"Show us into a private room, if you please," he said; "and bring up a bottle of cham. Do you keep Heidsieck's monopoly? All right. Let's have a bottle, and a couple of your best weeds."

"Certainly, gentlemen," said the host. There was something in Ragshaw's manner which overawed him, and Ragshaw was so deferential to Kimberley that the host knew not what to think of it.

"There's a swell up-stairs," he told his wife, "as is treating young Kimberley to champagne and cigars."

"I don't want the young man ill on *my* premises," said the Grey Mare, who was the better horse. She had found the money to purchase stock and goodwill when she and the landlord married.

"It's a queer start," said the landlord. "The man's a swell, there's no doubt o' that, and yet he's a bowing and scraping to that Kimberley as if he was a lord."

The landlady glided away to listen, and the conversation now to be recorded was public property before closing time.

"Are you strong enough to listen to the rest, sir?" asked Ragshaw in tones of delicate sympathy.

"Yes," said the landed proprietor.

"There is, of course, a large sum of money, the product of the

rents of the estate during the long minority of the deceased. It has been invested by the trustees in various ways, and it represents, in round figures, a quarter of a million."

The listening landlady gasped at the question which followed.

"Does that," said Kimberley feebly, "does that—belong to me?"

"Yes, sir; most undoubtedly, sir," responded Mr. Ragshaw.

"When shall I—have it?"

"You enter, sir, upon immediate possession of the whole property. My firm has given instructions to our bankers to honour your draft at sight, and I am instructed to hand you this cheque-book. I need not say, sir, that I am delighted to be honoured with such a commission, sir."

"Oh, dear me," said the millionnaire, and taking the cheque-book he sat crushed.

"Pray permit me, sir." Mr. Ragshaw filled up Bolsover's half-empty glass and replenished his own with an air of homage. The landlady arose from her place and went gliding down the stairs. Curiosity was still strong in her, but she was faint and needed support before she could endure farther.

"George," she said to the landlord, "give me a little drop of brandy. I'm in such a twitter you might knock me down with a feather. Now don't you ask me no questions, for I can't stop to answer 'em."

"If I can be of service to you in any capacity, Mr. Kimberley," Ragshaw began, just as she resumed her post, "I am instructed to place myself entirely in your hands for a day, or even two. About your temporary abode for a day or two, sir? Will it be convenient for you to stay here?"

"Ye-es," said Kimberley; but the idea more than half-frightened him.

"Any little addition, sir," hinted Mr. Ragshaw, with an almost ladylike delicacy of demeanour; "any little addition to your—wardrobe, sir?"

"I've got another suit at home," returned Kimberley, with much dubiety.

"There is a position to maintain, sir," said Ragshaw, "if I may respectfully mention it."

Poor Kimberley took a sip at his champagne. He was unused to the beverage, and he began to experience a strange wild glow, an unaccustomed half-hysterical exultation; so that he hardly knew whether to laugh or cry, and was on the point of doing both together.

"There is something in what you say, sir," he returned. It crossed him, with a feminine sense of the loveliness of bright attire, that he might even dress like Ragshaw, if he chose. He had never longed for finery. In his meagre, unambitious way, he had been contented with his lot, and what he could not hope for he had never dared to wish for. But now the egregious plaid of Ragshaw's trousers, his buff waistcoat, the opalescent bulb on his breast, his yellow dog-skin gloves, and all his other outrageous sartorial gaieties, might even be shared by Kimberley, and the late quill-driver's head swam with the first thought of personal vanity which had ever assailed it.

"Wilkins in the High Street, sir," suggested Mr. Ragshaw, "is a very passable tailor. Shall I send for him, sir? Or, would you prefer to employ a man in town?" Kimberley made no response. "Perhaps Wilkins will do at present, sir? He is a tenant of your own." Kimberley was still silent. "You will be expected, sir, to encourage local trade a little, if I may venture to suggest it."

"Yes," said Kimberley, tremulously. "We'll go presently."

"Oh, dear no, sir," returned Ragshaw, blending instruction with worship, as a prince's preceptor might. "That would never do, sir. We will *send* for Wilkins, sir."

He rang the bell, and the landlady, having noiselessly retired, came up with a bustle, and answered the summons in person.

"Oblige me," said Ragshaw, "by despatching a messenger to Wilkins, the tailor in the High Street, requesting him to wait upon me here."

The landlady, having received this command, retired to put it into execution.

"Young Kimberley," said the landlord, addressing a visitor, as she entered the bar, "is up-stairs with a swell as is standing fizz to him and the best cigars."

The visitor was Mr. Blandy, solicitor, a bald-headed man, with an angry, brandified complexion; no less a person than Mr. Kimberley's employer.

"Is he, begad?" said Mr. Blandy, with amazement. "That's a new move."

"'Sh!" cried the landlady; for the solicitor's voice was not only dogmatic but loud, and the door was open. "Mr. Kimberley is proved to be the heir to the Gallowbay Estate."

The landlady had never enjoyed so supreme a triumph in her life. The recipients of the astonishing news fairly gaped at her. She told what she knew, but omitted to state the means by

which she had acquired her information; and, as they listened, the solicitor and the landlord each surrendered his tumbler, and let fall the hand which had caressed it.

"Who is it?" asked the solicitor, who was the first to recover. "Who is with him?"

"It's a ginger-headed person," said the landlord, "with whiskers of the same, tallish and dressed tip-top."

"That's Ragshaw for a fiver," said Mr. Blandy. "For a fiver it's Ragshaw. Begg and Batter were agents for the trustees, and Ragshaw is their head man. God bless my soul! What a windfall! Well, there never was a man who deserved good fortune better. I have been honoured by that young man's presence in my office for twenty years, Burridge, and I say of him that he is worthy of his good fortune, and that he will be an ornament to any sphere into which it may please Providence to call him. You will remember, Burridge, that I was the first to say so. As an honest man, Burridge, you will bear me out in that."

"Certainly," said Burridge. "As an old employer of the young man's, I should say as you ought to be met with a sort of exceptional favour, so to speak. I should think there could not be a fitter man than you, sir, to conduct the interests of the estate."

"For once in your life, George," said the Grey Mare, "you're talking sense." The landlord was sensibly elated by this modified compliment, and having sipped at his tumbler, he murmured with the contemplative look of an admitted judge of things:

"There is not, I should fancy, a fitter man anywheres."

Mr. Blandy felt that his host and hostess were people of sound judgment, and his own prospects brightened in the effulgence of Kimberley's magnificent fortunes.

"Wilkins, the tailor, is to be sent for at once," said the landlady.

"I'll step down myself," replied the landlord, "and bring him back with me. This ought to bring a bit of prawsperity to Gallowbay, Mr. Blandy. The deceased owner being a minor, there's been no money spent in the town off that estate for nigh on fourteen, or may-be fifteen years."

"Kimberley," said the solicitor, "is a local man, and may be relied upon to promote local interests. I have some influence, and you may rely upon me to use it."

"I am sure of that, sir," said the landlady fervently; and Mr. Blandy felt, and, if he could have managed it, would have looked, like a local public benefactor.

"Begg and Batter," said Mr. Blandy, when the landlord had gone out, "will doubtless do their best to retain a full control of the estates; but after an association which has extended over a score of years, an association uninterrupted by one unfriendly breeze, I do not think that Bolsover Kimberley is the man to throw over an old friend."

"No, indeed, sir," said the landlady.

Meanwhile Kimberley and Ragshaw had started on a new conversational tack.

"I think," said the new-made man of money with trembling lips, "that you gave me a notion that the estate adjoins Shouldershott Park?"

He knew that well enough, and had known it years ago, but he could not help drifting to the question.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Ragshaw, in respectful affirmation. "It was generally supposed," he added, without a guess of the tremor into which this statement would throw his companion, "that the late proprietor of the estate would marry a daughter of Lord Windgall's."

"Lady Ella?" inquired Kimberley in a choking voice.

"Oh, dear no, sir," responded Ragshaw. "Her sister, Lady Alice Louisa Santerre, who is four years younger. Only fifteen, I believe, sir."

"That's very young," said Kimberley, trying to look as if he were discussing a matter which had no interest for him.

"It was understood, I believe, sir," replied Ragshaw, with the manner of a man of fashion. "These great families, sir, look upon marriage as a sort of affair of state. Lord Windgall is not a wealthy peer."

"I never heard," said Kimberley, with the champagne beating wildly in his head, "that Lady Ella was engaged."

"Well, as a matter of fact there never was an engagement," said Ragshaw, who was as intimate with the affairs of the aristocracy as if he had been a reporter to a Society journal. "But it was understood, I believe, that there was an attachment. A Mr. Clare—the Honourable Mr. Clare—a younger son of Lord Montacute's. The parents, it was understood, were opposed on both sides."

"Oh," said Bolsover Kimberley, and for the time being said no more. But in the middle of a great auriferous glow, the spirit of Heidsieck's extra sec showed him the lovely face and figure of Lady Ella. And it was he himself who was kneeling at her feet. Then, at that amazing awful presumption, he awoke

and groaned aloud with sudden shame, and Mr. Ragshaw jumped to his feet and stared at him across the table.

"Are you in pain, sir?" inquired Ragshaw, twisting his features to imply a sympathetic understanding.

"I don't feel altogether comfortable," said the millionnaire.

Mr. Ragshaw twisted his features anew, until his face was a mere mass of wrinkles.

"Perhaps, sir," he suggested with profound respect, "you are not accustomed to tobacco."

"I take a pipe of an evening," said Kimberley. "It isn't that. I'm better, thank you."

A knock at the door announced the arrival of the tailor. He had heard the news, and so ducked and grinned at Kimberley that if the little man had been in full possession of his faculties he would have thought the tailor deranged. The patterns were spread out upon the table, and Kimberley, egged on by Ragshaw and the tradesman, found himself choosing an unheard-of number of samples, and ordering clothes enough to make dandies of half-a-dozen commercial travellers for a year.

Ragshaw followed the tradesman from the room.

"It will be worth your while," he said in an impressive whisper, "to see that all those things have the real fashionable cut. It might pay you, sir, to engage a special man. Mr. Kimberley, as a Gallowbay man, will naturally wish to cultivate local interests, but he will need to be well served. You are not yet aware, perhaps"—he was sure the man *was* aware, but he wanted to know how the story had got abroad—"of the change in Mr. Kimberley's fortunes?"

"Why, yes, sir," replied the tailor, "I learned from Mr. Burridge. You may rely upon my doing my best, sir. My first cousin on my mother's side, sir, is cutter-out to one of the best London houses, sir—a Bond Street house—and I shall send the patterns and measurements up to him and ask him to oblige me."

"Very good," said Mr. Ragshaw loftily. "I hope your efforts will be satisfactory. You will push the goods forward? Thank you."

The tailor departed, first to display the selected patterns in the bar, and next, after a friendly glass, to his shop. Then the boot-maker was sent for, and the hatter, and the hosier, preference in each instance being given to Bolsover's tenants. The thing began to look like a mad and fantastic dream, and there were moments when the confusion of Kimberley's thoughts mounted to such a height of stupefaction and bewilderment that he would

have been glad to awake from it and find himself bound to the desk again.

To all this excitement and bewilderment succeeded dinner, but Bolsover played a very poor knife and fork indeed, in spite of Ragshaw's promptings. He saw several things he had never seen in all his simple life before; and the little paper ruffles at the end of the cutlets, the sheet of stiff writing-paper which lay between the fish and the dish on which it was served, the coloured claret-glasses, the table-napkins, the silver forks, the dish-covers, were all new to him. Black coffee was a curious and distasteful novelty. He had been used to take a very weak and watery decoction of coffee and chicory. He had, in short, been used to all the ways of decent poverty, and had never dined at a hotel table before. It was natural that he should take Ragshaw as his model in dealing with these unexpected and unknown things, and he held his knife and fork like Ragshaw, and a bit of bread to hold his fish steady whilst he got at it with his fork like Ragshaw; and whatsoever that cultured being did Kimberley followed suit.

The landlady herself served at table, and was embarrassingly obsequious, and but for Ragshaw's presence Kimberley felt that he would have sunk altogether beneath the weight of her attentions. He did not quite know it, but he had never been so unhappy in his life before, never so helpless, never so little satisfied with himself. But the great blow of the day fell when the triumvirate from the *Whig* appeared, and the landlady ushered in first the Editor, next Mr. Amelia, and last Mr. Maddox, a terrible youth who had publicly chaffed him at the weekly meetings of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society, and whom he knew to entertain the meanest opinions of him. When they were announced Kimberley almost clung to Ragshaw.

"You won't leave me, sir, will you?" said the miserable millionnaire.

"Allow me to take all the trouble from your shoulders, sir," returned Mr. Ragshaw. When the trio entered he ushered each one to a seat with magnificent courtesy. "And now, gentlemen, in what way can we be of service to you?"

"Well," said the meek Editor defensively, "the sudden change in Mr. Kimberley's position (upon which I am sure nobody congratulates him more heartily than I do)—the sudden change is of course likely to be very interesting to the townspeople, and indeed to the country at large. I am the editor of the *Gallowbay Whig*, as Mr. Kimberley knows, and these

gentlemen are members of the staff. We are here to ask if Mr. Kimberley will oblige us with a few little details of his career. This is Mr. Amelia, our chief of staff, Mr. Kimberley. Perhaps if you would be so good as to talk to him for a few minutes whilst Mr. Ragshaw—Mr. Ragshaw, I believe?—whilst Mr. Ragshaw gives me a few particulars about the estate, and the tracing of the family connection, we might economize a little time."

Mr. Amelia fixed the millionnaire and drew a chair up to the table near the corner at which he sat. Next he produced a notebook and a pencil ready sharpened.

"We may as well begin at the beginning, sir," he said, with cheerful affability. "Kindly tell me the date of your birth."

"I was thirty-five last March," said Kimberley feebly, with an appealing glance at Ragshaw.

"Day of the month?" said Mr. Amelia.

"The tenth."

"Native place?"

"Gallowbay."

"Christian names of parents?"

"Bolsover and Mary Ann." Kimberley began to find himself at ease. Mr. Amelia was not abasing himself before him as everybody else had done that day, and his crisp business manner was like a tonic to the bashful man.

"Any facts about your father's history?"

"I don't think so," answered Kimberley, uncertainly.

"Must have been *some* facts," said Mr. Amelia, cheerfully. "Born somewhere. Died somewhere. Got married betweenwhiles. Pursued some occupation, probably."

"He was born in Gallowbay," said Kimberley, thus stimulated. "I don't think he had any occupation in particular."

"Private means?" asked Mr. Amelia.

"Oh, dear no, sir," replied Kimberley. "But he was rather feeble in his health, and, mostly, my mother provided for the 'ouse."

"We are willing to give information freely," said Mr. Ragshaw, breaking in at this point, and leaving a query of the Editor's unanswered; "but we expect discretion to be employed."

"Certainly; certainly," says the Editor. "Perhaps Mr. Kimberley would like to see the proofs before we go to press. He can then—eliminate anything he would prefer not to appear."

"That will be quite satisfactory, sir; quite satisfactory," said

Mr. Ragshaw in his grandest manner; and the examination being continued, Bolsover laid bare his simple annals.

The proof-sheets came next day, and he read with blushes, and with pride and shame and a strange crowd of mingled feelings, the life and history of "our distinguished townsman." He read that he was rather below than above the middle height, of pleasing exterior and unassuming manners. He read that he looked back at his boyhood's days with affectionate regret, and that he still cherished a lively interest in that benevolent foundation to which he himself owed his early training. He read all the proofs of his descent from the Commodore "on the distaff side," and discovered that a far-away ancestor of whom he had never heard before had been ennobled by Richard the Second. After all he was somebody in the world, and it was a proud thing to know it.

But his long life of servitude, his native shyness, and his want of nerve, the habits formed in the thirty-five years for which he had been nobody in particular, all weighed heavily upon him, and he was far from being happy.

CHAPTER III.

The offices of Messrs. Begg, Batter, and Bagg, solicitors, stood back a little from the High Street of the county town, behind a bower of trees and shrubs, and the senior partner sitting alone, with his window open to the summer weather, could, if he were so minded, see, without being seen, all passengers and equipages that moved along the road. Messrs. Begg, Batter, and Bagg performed the very highest class of business, and enjoyed the confidence of the nobility and gentry. Even though the profits of the firm had to be parted into three shares, each partner drew a fat and comfortable income. The senior partner's share was naturally the fattest and most comfortable, and the senior partner himself was a man of genial and tolerant aspect, ecclesiastical rather than legal in his looks; something like a rural dean—if one could fancy such a thing—in mufti.

He sat back in his chair, staring placidly at the street and toying with his gold-rimmed double glasses, a sunny, respectable, well-to-do old man, with scarcely a care upon his mind.

A knock at the door awoke him from his reverie, and a clerk announced Lord Windgall.

"Show his lordship this way, Mr. Yielding," said the senior partner, and the clerk retiring, the old gentleman arose, pulled down his portly waistcoat with both hands, and settled his tall collars.

"The Earl of Windgall, sir," said the clerk, throwing open the door. Mr. Begg advanced to meet his lordship, and shook hands in a way which implied a recognition of the privilege bestowed upon him.

"A fine day," said the solicitor. "Beautiful growing weather. We should look for a fine harvest this year."

"Yes," said his lordship, dropping into the chair the clerk had set for him, and laying his hat and cane upon the table. "What's this news about Gallowbay, Begg?"

The Earl of Windgall was a small man with grey side whiskers and grey tufty hair. He was a good deal withered, and features that had once been delicate had grown pinched and careworn. His grey eyes were kindly, and looked from under his shaggy grey eyebrows with a glance of sagacity and sometimes of dry humour; but the dominant expression of his face was to be found in the region of the lips, and was almost querulous.

"What's this news about Gallowbay, Begg? Is it true?"

"What *is* the news, my lord?" asked the solicitor, rubbing his hands and smiling comfortably, as if to say that a lawyer should stand out for precision.

"That a clerk in the office of that fellow Blandy has turned out to be heir to the Gallowbay estate."

"That is certainly true," said Mr. Begg. "That is undeniably true."

"Ah!" said his lordship, pulling his gloves off nervously and beginning to pull them on again. "It is true, eh? M-m-m. No possibility of a flaw in the proofs? No Tittlebat Titmouse business over again?"

Mr. Begg let off a mellow laugh, subdued to the confidential tone, and rubbed his hands again.

"Capital story that," he said. "Apart from its treatment of the legal element, a capital story."

"Do you know the man?" asked Windgall. "Have you seen him?"

"No," said Mr. Begg, lightly. "We expect him to call to-morrow. Mr. Ragshaw, our managing clerk, went over and communicated the news to him in the first instance."

"What sort of a fellow is he?" The peer wore a self-conscious and almost guilty look when he put this question. "Can he carry his money?"

"Well," said Mr. Begg, "so far as I can judge from Ragshaw's report, he will find it rather hard to carry his money. He seems to be a shy little man, gauche and—and—underbred, even for his late position."

Mr. Begg made this announcement with an air of delicacy. One would scarcely have thought him likely to be so tender to an absent stranger, howsoever considerable his affairs might be. When he had spoken he looked at Lord Windgall, and Lord Windgall looked at him, with an odd kind of reticence in expression.

"That is a pity," said the withered peer.

"Yes," assented the lawyer, "it is something of a pity, certainly."

"After all," said his lordship, throwing one leg over the other, and taking up his cane from the table, "these are radical and republican days, and a man who has more than a million is bound to be respectable." He took the cane at either end and bent it to and fro, examining its texture closely meanwhile.

"No doubt," said Mr. Begg, as if there were comfort in the reflection; "no doubt."

"I should like to see him," said the grey little nobleman, glancing at the lawyer in a casual way. Kimberley was a natural object for curiosity, and it was likely that many people would care to see him. He was the nine days' wonder of the county. "I suppose you will act for him, as you did for poor young Edward?"

Poor young Edward was the deceased minor—Edward Bolsover—whose early death had wrecked the brightest chances the Windgall family-craft had ever carried.

"I suppose so," said the lawyer. "It is not probable that he will take his affairs out of our hands. Blandy is after him—his late employer. That, of course," said Mr. Begg, with a gesture of allowance, "is only natural."

"I presume," said the Earl, "that even if he wanted to call in his money you could arrange elsewhere."

"With regard to the first mortgage?" asked Mr. Begg. "Certainly. Your lordship need be under no apprehension in that quarter."

"And what about the new arrangement?" the Earl asked, nervously.

"Impossible, my lord," returned Mr. Begg, with regretful emphasis. "I regret to say it, but—impossible."

"Very well," said the Earl, with a sigh. "I suppose the timber must go."

"I am afraid so," returned Mr. Begg, "I am very much afraid so. In fact, I can see nothing else for it—nothing—else—for it."

"It looks bad," said his lordship.

"It is bad," answered the solicitor. "Very unfortunate. Very. But unavoidable."

"If poor Edward had lived," said the Earl, rising and laying his hand upon his hat, "it would all have been very different."

"Yes, indeed," assented Mr. Begg. "He was young, but he understood things. He saw, from both sides, the advantages of the match. Birth and beauty on one side, and on the other vast possessions."

"But then he wasn't a parvenu," said his lordship, "any more than I am a pauper. Poor Edward was a gentleman to the finger-tips. He was beginning to take an intelligent interest in politics; he would have contested a borough or two against the Whigs, and, with his wealth and the influence one could command for him, reward was sure; he would have had his peerage to a certainty." Lord Windgall sighed again, and dug the point of his stick half-a-dozen times at a particular spot in the carpet. "I can speak to you, Begg, with some freedom," he went on. Mr. Begg bowed slightly in acknowledgment, but the other was not looking at him. "Poor Edward's death was the greatest blow I can remember. Even the death of her ladyship was not so great a misfortune. Every man thinks his own corns ache worse than his neighbour's, but, upon my word, I seem to be marked out for trouble."

Mr. Begg looked sympathetic, but had nothing to say. The Earl after a short pause went on again—

"The timber has to go now, and that's an unpleasant thing to happen, a confoundedly unpleasant thing. But I suppose you're right, and there's no help for it."

"To tell you the plain truth, my lord," said Mr. Begg, "nothing but the knowledge of the existing engagement between the Honourable Miss Alice and poor young Bolsover prevented the timber from going a year ago. The estates lie side by side, and a union between the two families looked a very natural and very fitting thing. Very natural. Very fitting."

Mr. Begg was plainly embarrassed, and was doing his best to

seem at ease. He and his noble client were friends in a way, and he was as grieved at the Windgall family troubles as any lawyer could be expected to be. He had it in his mind that his lordship was willing to see a way out of his troubles, and the idea disturbed him, because the way seemed disgraceful to an old family, even if it could be taken, and could only be entered on with a sense of meanness. If Bolsover Kimberley had been a gentleman—if he had only been ever so little like a gentleman —it would have been better. Any newly-made millionnaire might rejoice at the chance of a union with the Santerres; and if the millionnaire were only presentable, the Santerres had right enough to rejoice at the chance of a union with him.

"We're asked to pity the poor working classes, begad!" said the Earl, with a half-hearted laugh. "Who pities a poor peer?" He tried to make jest of this, but it was too obviously a serious thing with him, and Mr. Begg's embarrassment deepened. He could have wished that the head of so noble a family should have been a little more like his own ideal of a nobleman, and he was certain that no troubles of his own would have drawn him into this sort of confidence with a lawyer if he had been a peer of the realm. Most people think more highly of worldly dignities than the holders of them can afford to do. The wearer of any dignity is conscious of the man within the robe. The most undignified pains do not spare him. "I must have a look at this fellow," said Windgall, suddenly, and with as casual an air as he could assume. "All the county's talking about him, and I'm curious to see what manner of man he is. If he isn't actually impossible one can hardly help meeting so near a neighbour."

Mr. Begg allowed a silent sigh to escape him.

"He is staying at the 'Windgall Arms,' my lord, at Gallowbay."

"I can't call on him there," said the Earl, hastily. He actually blushed a second later to think how plainly he was showing his hand. But the very shame he felt helped him to harden his heart. "I shall either have to know him or not to know him," he went on, "and I may as well know which it is to be at once. About what time is he to be here to-morrow?"

"We expect him at noon," said Mr. Begg, accepting the inevitable, though with an audible sigh this time. "If your lordship should care to call at one o'clock we could introduce him then. Ragshaw," he added, "is not the best judge of a

gentleman in the world, to be sure, but he has formed the meanest opinion of him—the meanest opinion."

"Ragshaw?" said the Earl. "Oh! Your managing clerk! Yes, I remember to have seen him. Well, you know, Begg, if the man's impossible, he *is* impossible, and there's an end of it. Don't bother me about the timber until you have made the best arrangement you see your way to. Good day. I shall drop in to-morrow to have a look at our nine days' wonder."

The head of the eminent legal firm himself escorted the Earl to the carriage which waited without, and then returning to his own room rang his bell and asked for Mr. Ragshaw. Mr. Ragshaw appearing, in raiment of more sober dye than he had worn on the memorable morning of his visit to Kimberley, the lawyer feigned to be busy for a moment or two with the papers on his desk. Two or three of these he handed to the confidential clerk with instructions, and then, with the manner of one who suddenly remembers, he said—

"By the bye, Mr. Ragshaw, Mr. Kimberley comes to-morrow?"

"Yes, sir."

"At what time? At noon, did you say?"

"At noon, sir."

"What sort of a person is he, now?" asked Mr. Begg, turning round in his chair and fixing the gold-bound glasses on his nose. "You knew something of him, didn't you, before anybody guessed that he was worth a farthing?"

"I met him once or twice, sir, in the way of business," returned Ragshaw.

"Well, now, what did you think of him then? I don't want to know what you think of him now, for nobody thinks disrespectfully of a man rich as he is; but what were you accustomed to think of him?"

"Why, sir," said Mr. Ragshaw, with a smile which meant, if it meant anything, that Ragshaw had known the distance between Kimberley and himself, and had not been disposed to examine him too closely.

"Speak out," said Mr. Begg. "What did you think of him?"

"Well, sir," returned Ragshaw, smiling still, "I thought him a very inconsiderable sort of person. I don't know, sir, that I thought about him at all, to speak quite truly. He was not the sort of man, sir," added Ragshaw, "that a man feels inclined to think of."

"Nervous, I think you said?"

"Dreadfully nervous, sir. Very shy and awkward. Tried to cut a raised pie with a spoon at table, sir, and doubled it clean up. Then put the spoon in his coat pocket when he thought I wasn't looking."

"Well, now," said Mr. Begg, conversationally, and as if he were in a mood to unbend pleasantly, "he won't be able to hide himself. People won't let him hide himself. Do you think he'll polish? Is he the sort of man to polish? Has he any nous or *savoir faire* at all?"

"I don't think, sir," returned Ragshaw, "that he ever will get polished, since you ask my opinion. I should say you might as well try to polish a bath brick, sir."

"You might japan or lacquer even that," said the lawyer. "Let me see, how old is he—thirty-five?"

"Yes, sir," answered Ragshaw, "thirty-five."

"M-m-m!" said Mr. Begg. "You'll look into that matter of Barber's personally, Mr. Ragshaw?"

"Yes, sir," responded Ragshaw; and, feeling himself dismissed, withdrew. The old lawyer turned towards the window and fell to tapping his knuckles with his glasses.

"I'm afraid," he said to himself, "that his lordship will find him 'impossible,' as he calls it. And yet I don't know. There are men who would consort with a Caribbean savage hunchbacked, if he owned a million of money. There are men who would consent to become father-in-law to a gorilla for half the money. I shall see the young man for myself to-morrow."

He dismissed the theme from his thoughts, and scarcely allowed it again to enter his mind until nearly noon on the following day, when in spite of himself he became interested in the approaching visitor, and wondered what he would be like. The Cathedral clock was chiming "Adeste Fideles" to mark the hour of noon, and the sound came pleasantly subdued through closed windows, when one of the clerks tapped at the door, and, being told to enter, presented Mr. Begg with a card which bore the name of Bolsover Kimberley.

"Show the gentleman into this room," said Mr. Begg, and a minute later he had his wish, and beheld the new-fledged millionnaire. Poor Kimberley had lost no time in the adornment of the outer man, and he was carefully modelled on the lines which had been presented to his admiring mind by Mr. Ragshaw. The egregious glare of scarlet scarf, the buff waistcoat, the sky-blue morning coat with the rose in the button-hole, the drab dust overcoat thrown open to display these glories, the

loud-patterned plaid trousers, the white gaiters, and the patent leather boots—all were there. Kimberley's fingers were cased in kid gloves of primrose colour; his all-round collar fixed his neck as if he had been pilloried; he carried a white hat and a tasselled walking cane with a gold knob; his watch was cabled to his waistcoat by a gorgeous golden fetter. To make matters worse, he was not merely overdressed, but he knew it, and looked as if he knew it. He perspired with shame and vain-glory, and his harmless countenance was a compendium of embarrassments. His meek whiskers drooped as if in deprecation of their owner's splendour, and his meek hair stood up in places as if it protested against any possible supposition of its approval of the vulgar magnificences below it.

The old lawyer received him with gravity, and having shaken hands with him, offered him a seat, and talked trifles for a moment or two to put him at his ease. Then he began to speak of business, and Kimberley listened at first with a pitiable whirl in his head, but later on with some understanding. Mr. Begg was a great man, of course, and Kimberley had known of him almost from the beginning of his own legal career, but had never before been called upon to face him even for a moment. Messrs. Begg, Batter, and Bagg were undoubtedly the first solicitors in the county, and Mr. Begg was senior partner and a sort of monarch among country solicitors, like Kimberley's late employer. But the awe with which the clerk had always regarded him was melting away, and if he had been less burdened by his clothes, Kimberley would have felt almost at his ease. The announcement of the Earl of Windgall was like the bursting of a bomb-shell. There was nothing in the world which could have terrified him more.

"Pray show his lordship to this room at once," said the lawyer. "Have you met his lordship, Mr. Kimberley?" He asked the question in the most commonplace tone, and as if Kimberley to his certain knowledge had been on intimate terms with half the peerage. "If not, I shall be delighted to introduce you."

The visitor arose feebly with trembling limbs, and was indeed so alarmed that he found courage to protest.

"Not to-day, sir, if you please. I'm very sorry, but I'm——"

"You are not at all in the way, Mr. Kimberley, I assure you. I know his lordship's business, and shall not detain you more than a moment." His lordship entered and saluted Mr. Begg, disregarding Kimberley, though he knew perfectly well

who he was. "Permit me to introduce Mr. Kimberley to your lordship." His lordship turned with a sort of delighted alacrity. "The Earl of Windgall, Mr. Kimberley."

The Earl of Windgall was a little man, but Kimberley was still smaller of stature. The nobleman carried himself, if not exactly like a nobleman, like a well-bred man of the world; and Kimberley shrank and shrivelled before him, so that the difference in physique was emphasised by attitude. There are lawyers' clerks in the world—so high a development has courage reached in man—who would endure a personal introduction to an Earl with a pretence of self-possession, but Kimberley had always been shy, and had never got out of the habit of being crushed by the lecturers whom it was his duty to receive in behalf of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society.

"I am pleased to meet you, Mr. Kimberley," said his lordship, shaking the wretched little man by the hand.

Mr. Kimberley gasped and gurgled in response, and his meek and distressed little figure-head looked curiously in contrast with the vulgar finery which decorated his person. The Earl took a seat and talked easily with Mr. Begg about the ordinary topics of the moment, and now and then a turn of the head plainly but unobtrusively included Kimberley, who began to feel less oppressed. Really an Earl did not seem to be so terrible a creature after all; and in a little time Kimberley began to plume himself in harmless trembling vanity upon sitting in the same room with a nobleman and a great lawyer, and to feel that he was somebody in the world after all.

Windgall had seen his perturbation, and gave him time to recover before he again addressed him.

"I hope," he said, after a time, but even then he spoke to the lawyer, "that Mr. Kimberley will see his way to a residence amongst us."

"I hope so too," said Mr. Begg, with an inquiring and encouraging eye on Kimberley; but the mere mention of his name had driven the millionnaire into his shell again.

"Property," said the Earl, with a little sigh, "entails responsibilities, of which no man can venture to be unmindful."

"The long minority of the late owner," said Mr. Begg, with a regretful air, "was a great grievance to the Gallowbay people—a great and legitimate grievance. Mr. Kimberley will be expected to spend a little time in Gallowbay. Perhaps," he rubbed his hands and laughed, a "little money."

"A good deal of trouble," said the millionnaire, with fatuous

countenance, but with more wisdom than he was aware of, "seems to go along with having money." He blushed and looked unhappy, but having found his tongue, he managed to go on in spite of his discomfort. "But if you'll be so good, sir, as to let me know what I ought to do, I shall try to do it. The money might have come into 'ands that could dispense it better, but into none more willing, I'm sure."

"There is good sense and modesty in this young man," said the Earl to himself, trying hard to think his best of Mr. Kimberley.

It is not often that the effort to think well of any of our fellow-creatures makes us feel mean, but the Earl of Windgall was not proud of himself whilst he tried to think well of Bolsover Kimberley.

"I shall always be happy to advise you, Mr. Kimberley," said the lawyer.

He did not speak as a lawyer to a client, but as a man of experience to a man of inexperience, and Kimberley so understood him, and murmured that he would be very much obliged.

"I won't interrupt you further, Mr. Begg," said his lordship. "I am pleased to have met Mr. Kimberley, and I trust we shall see more of each other."

Mr. Kimberley blushed, and bowed in a prodigious flutter. The Earl of Windgall would be glad to see more of him! There is nobody who does not like to be flattered by his own good opinion; and to have been shy and humble all one's life is no defence against vanity if it really makes an assault. Whilst the lawyer saw the gracious nobleman down-stairs, Kimberley struck into an attitude of mild swagger, and twirled his cane, though he blushed even as he did so. It crossed him with a thrilling sense of daring that he would shave off his whiskers and allow his moustache to grow. He might even take to wearing an eye-glass. Then even the Lady Ella might look at him, and for one minute might forget the lowliness of his first estate.

The Earl was driven homeward, and as he went he tried to persuade himself that he was weighing things in his mind, and trying to arrive at an honourable conclusion. In spite of himself he felt that he was engaged in a shameful enterprise. People would talk if he invited this gilded little snob to Shouldershott Castle, and would know very well why he was asked there. Let them talk. The man was a cad? There was no escape from that conclusion. Well—lots of men were cads.

"Caddom," said his lordship, with a flash of cynical humour, "is not monopolised by the peers. It isn't actually amazing to meet a cad who is a commoner!"

It was very shameful, all the same, to be fishing for a fellow whose only recommendation was his money.

"And a very good recommendation too, by gad!" said the poor peer. "A million and a quarter! And if I don't catch him, somebody else will, and the people who will be the most bitterly satirical will be the people who have failed."

CHAPTER IV.

The Honourable John George Alaric FitzAdington Clare was the second son of Lord Montacute, a nobleman famous for his prodigious losses on the turf. To be as unlucky as Montacute had been almost a proverb among sporting men. His fortune had known no deviation: no big win had ever consoled him. In his youth he went to Baden with an infallible system, intent on breaking the bank; and, as does occasionally happen, in spite of the most infallible of systems, the bank broke him. He was, until his father died, as poor as Job after this escapade, but the kindly tribes helped him until he came into the family estates and married money. The man who at one-and-twenty could realise his all to set it on the hazard of the black and red, could thereafter borrow at exorbitant interest to lose his borrowings. When he came into his own he "went the whole elephant"—an elegant and expressive locution indicative of thoroughness in pursuit of an object—and whatever he could lose he lost. But for the entail and the marriage settlement he would have beggared his wife and children. The human intellect is so curiously arranged that there were people who admired him, and he was with many the type of the Good Old English Gentleman. He squandered money which was not righteously his own, he associated mainly with people who were miles beneath him in social state and education, he was an hereditary legislator and the boon companion of jockeys. A hard drinker, a bad husband, and a careless father, he was

popular with the community he cared most to know, and he died lamented, a nobleman of the old school, whom the sporting prints mourned as the last, or almost the last, of his race.

He married an angel of a woman, and but that she was blessed with the care of children, he would have broken one of the sweetest hearts in the world. Lady Montacute had two sons, and she made it her study to breed them like Christian gentlemen. Even when lads do not remember all their mothers' lessons, they remember some of them, and the memory of the sorrowful soul who stayed at home and prayed for them kept them many a time out of mischief of the graver sort. She taught them her own simple religious creed, and if they forgot it, as boys do forget, they cherished, at least, a sort of heathen reverence for sacred things, and led lives which in the main were pure and wholesome.

The new Lord Montacute, poor as he was, was a model landlord, and he laid himself out to secure an honourable position in politics. The Honourable John, his brother, chose the profession of arms, and was a favourite alike with the men of his regiment and with his brother officers. The two young men, in short, conducted themselves with so much probity and good sense, had so high a code of honour, and were withal so genial and likeable, that the heart of their mother was glad in them, and her widowhood made atonement for the unhappiness of her married life.

It is not held to be convenient, even in the most leisurely circles, to speak of a man by so lengthy a style as that owned by the Honourable John George Alaric FitzAdington Clare, and it was the custom among his intimates to call the young gentleman Jack.

He was a model of graceful strength, and had a plain English face, expressive of many pleasing qualities, amongst which candour and good humour were conspicuous. His hair was of a reddish chestnut hue, and his disposition was proportionately warm, hopeful, and impetuous. He was five-and-twenty years of age, had just got his troop, and was an almost universal favourite. Yet, in spite of all his advantages of youth, health, birth, and temperament, Jack Clare was unhappy, and his sorrows arose from one of the commonest of causes. The young man was in love, very loyally and honestly in love, and he had good reason to believe his passion hopeless.

There are few growths of social life so curious as the various

conditions of poverty. Jack Clare had his pay and an allowance of three hundred pounds a year. The Lady Ella Santerre, to whom he was profoundly devoted, had in her own right an income about equal to her lover's, and she liked him well enough to have married him, if poverty's stern barrier could have been taken down. The young people, with the improvidence natural to youth, were ready to brave the world on this absurdly insufficient income, but the lady had a father who had known the grip of poverty all his life, and the young man had a mother who had felt its sting for many years, and the one commanding and the other persuading kept the two children out of mischief.

Jack, being quartered at Bryanstowe, was within an easy drive of Montacute Honour, and was naturally often to be seen at home. He made very creditable efforts to appear cheerful there, but both his mother and his brother could see through his artifices, and knew that he was taking his love affairs seriously. Lord Montacute was something of a Liberal amongst the Conservative Peers with whom he sat, and he was regarded by some of the more old-fashioned as being a little dangerous in his views, but Jack, who had never hitherto meddled with politics at all, began to have such awfully freethinking ideas that his elder brother trembled for him.

"I'll be hanged," he said one day, "if I can see the good of an aristocracy at all." Lord Montacute looked at his brother with an eye of doubtful expression. Was there a tile loose anywhere, or was there a joke in store? "We're all one flesh and blood," said Jack, "and I've got just as many toes and fingers as a ploughman has. And I'll tell you what it is, Charley. There's a smash coming—a break-up—here, there, and everywhere. We can't stand the racket, Charley. Those Radical fellows won't have us much longer unless we wake up and do something."

Lord Montacute answered only the concluding sentence of this discontented young man's address.

"The loyal party in the country is quite strong enough to hold the Radicals in check."

"I am not so sure of that," said Jack; "and even if it's true, I am not sure that it always will be, and I am not even sure that it ought to be."

"Jack," said Lord Montacute, "these are very serious opinions."

"They are, indeed," said Jack.

"They are crude and dangerous opinions," said Lord Montacute, with gravity. "The only way with them is to think them clearly out."

Then Jack Clare arose and delivered an harangue which well-nigh caused his noble brother's glossy and combined locks to part, and each particular hair to stand on end. Time had been, he declared, when an aristocracy had been useful to the world, and its growth a thing inevitable. Whilst the priesthood conserved learning, the aristocracy conserved or modelled manners, and created a heathen code of morals to supplement and perfect the code taught by the priests. Now their work was done, their day was over, the only thing left for them was to sing *Nunc dimittis* and gracefully retire. The chariot of public progress was coming down the road, and the aristocratic apple-cart would be overturned. Then, ceasing to be figurative and general, the young man proceeded to handle his own case, and to show by it that an hereditary aristocracy was placed in a false position.

"I am as poor as a rat, and I am not only poor, but I am a prisoner. I am hampered by ten thousand absurd conventions."

"Mention ten," said Montacute.

The Honourable Mr. Clare did not see his way to the immediate mention of ten. This kind of request is apt to be disconcerting to an orator, who must needs have a little fervour to get along with.

"If I were not a gentleman," he declared, "I should be free to choose whatever career seemed fittest for me."

"Do you propose to abolish gentlemen?" Montacute demanded.

"That's very well as repartee," said Jack, "but it isn't argument. I don't want to abolish a slave because I ask you to knock off his fetters. Why am I poor?"

"You are poor and I am poor," said Montacute, "for reasons which are best not talked about."

"I am poor," cried Jack, "because I am the son of a nobleman and the brother of a nobleman. I am poor by convention and general understanding. But I am not poor in reality. My little handful of money goes in things that are necessary to no man's happiness or well-being. If it were reasonably spent it would give me all a man need ask for. Apart from the conventions, I am wealthy. Restricted by the conventions, I am only not a pauper. And these same conventions, let me tell you, Charley, are blackguard and scoundrelly things. See what they lead to in our case. See what they can do, even with an angel

of a woman like our mother: the best woman we ever knew, and most likely the best woman we ever shall know."

"What have the conventions done to our mother, Jack?" asked the other, seriously.

Jack shrugged his shoulders, and turned away with a blush upon his cheek.

"You know well enough. It doesn't need that a man should have to storm against them, when he knows that they have persuaded such a woman as she is that her own sons are doing well in trying to marry money."

Lord Montacute lit a cigar—it was in his own private den that this conversation was held—and smoked for a minute or two before he answered.

"Jack," he said then, "the murder's out."

Jack, standing at the window, shrugged his broad shoulders anew, and blushed a second time.

"The cat is out of the bag," said his lordship, and again Jack shrugged his shoulders. "These ideas are not political, but personal. I put it to your better judgment: Is it worth while to hold and express such sentiments as I have listened to—sentiments which, if translated into action, would lead to serious consequences, possibly to disastrous consequences, not because you have deliberately and patiently arrived at them by much thinking, but because you have formed an unfortunate attachment to a lady?"

Jack Clare responded, without turning from the window.

"I submit to *your* better judgment. Is there nothing at fault in the social rules which makes the attachment unfortunate? Why should the attachment be unfortunate? What is there in the nature of things to make it anything but fortunate?"

"The world was made for us, Jack," said the elder brother, not unsympathetically. "If we could make it over again, there are many things in it we might like to alter. But we have to endure it as it is, and, in the main, even as it stands, it's not a very bad world."

"It *is* a bad world," returned Jack, turning upon his brother somewhat hotly, "and at the bottom of your heart you know it. A world full of lies, and humbug, and pretences—a world full of cruelty, and oppression, and bitterness."

"Jack," said my Lord Montacute, from his stand near the fireplace, "I am only half-a-dozen years older than you are, but I have been through the mill myself, and I know what it is;

and I'll tell you what I did all the time, and it's the identical thing I should advise you to do."

"You were always a superior person," said Jack, half humorous, half angry. "What did you do?"

"I held my jaw," said his lordship, watching the smoke of his cigar as it curled about him.

"All right," said Jack. "I can take a hint as well as my neighbours. I'll hold mine." He took a cigar from the open cabinet upon the table, lit it, and sat staring out of the window. By-and-by he asked, in a softened voice, "When was it, Charley?"

"When I was at Trinity," said Montacute, tranquilly.

"Who was she?"

Jack could lend a sympathising ear to an unprosperous love tale, when he could do it without looking sentimental, as he surely might do in the case of his own brother. "Who was she?"

"Little girl named Carmichael," answered Montacute, still staring at the smoke wreaths. "Cigar divan—opposite——"

"What?" cried Jack, rising with a gesture almost tragic. "You have the cheek to tell me that *you* have been through the mill, because you spooned a girl at a cigar divan before you were one-and-twenty! I supposed—if you honoured me with your confidence at all—that I should hear a story of lady and gentleman, and not of undergrad and shop-girl." He reseated himself, and smoked with a look of deep disgust, as if his tobacco were turned to wormwood. Lord Montacute smiled, and settled his shoulders against the mantel-shelf.

"King Cophetua wooed the beggar-maid," he answered, with no abatement of tranquillity. "You think the parallel between your case and mine unfair. I don't. A man can only be in love, just as he can only be dead. There are no comparatives—dead, more dead, most dead; in love, more in love, most in love. The thing is absolute, or it is a mere pretence. I was in love. I loathed the world, and I cursed social distinctions. Well, I got over it, and here I am, fairly happy, tolerably contented. But while the thing was on," he concluded, "I held my jaw."

"So I should imagine," said Jack, still mightily disdainful and disgusted.

Jack dined at Montacute Honour and drove back to barracks in the cool of the evening, beneath a moon which inspired all the quiet landscape, and seemed for all its peacefulness to be in some strange way in consonance with his own unsatisfied desire. It was unwise in him when he had reached his quarters and

dismissed his man to take out from a secret drawer the photographic presentment of the Lady Ella, and bending over it beneath the lamp to stare at it for an hour together. It was unwise to call to mind all the sweet things the beautiful lips had said to him, and all the tender glances the lovely eyes had given him, before the edict went out for their separation. But this was a sort of unwisdom which is common with five-and-twenty, and not very reprehensible to the mind of the sternest sage who can remember the days of his own youth, when his heart was warm and tender. That we should all *have* to grow grey, my brethren! That there should be no help for it!

There were young ladies in Bryanstowe and its neighbourhood who thought well of Captain the Honourable John George Alaric FitzAdington Clare, and some of them had money enough to have kept his starven coffers full for life; but they knew that smiles were wasted on him. A military man, handsome and nobly born, who has a romantic attachment to a lady in his own station, is likely to be an object of friendly interest to the young women who happen to know him, and Jack's story was, somehow or other, abroad. Nobody is altogether sure as to the way in which these things come to be known; but the attempt to keep them secret is very rarely successful. And when it became known that Lady Ella was a visitor at the house of her late mother's dear friend, Lady Caramel, and was thus brought within a dozen miles of Bryanstowe, all the fashionable tongues of that quarter of the world, were busy with conjectures as to what would happen. It was universally admitted that the poor girl's mother would have known better than to have brought her into such close proximity to an old lover—unless, indeed, contrary to general belief, the attachment had only been on one side—and it was owned that a father could not be expected to act with any great prescience in such a matter. For one thing, during the London season, a good mother would have taken care that a marriageable daughter should be in town, where she might have a chance of forming a desirable union, though as a set-off against that argument it was urged that there were two or three very eligible gentlemen in the neighbourhood, who were at home in good society, and had money enough to make them welcome to so poor a noble family as the Windgalls.

Lady Ella came, and local eyes and tongues were busy. Lady Ella's time of stay was over, and she went away again. The Argus eye had noted nothing; but something had happened beyond its vision. It had been seen that Captain Clare had not

accepted, if he had even received, a single invitation from Lady Ella's hostess, and that he had half-a-dozen times ridden out of town alone in the direction of Montacute Honour. But it was a secret buried in Jack's own breast that on each of these occasions he had turned off to the right, and had gone as straight as the roads would carry him towards the house which held his love. It was a secret from the prying eyes and gossiping tongues that he had prowled like a poacher about the park, eyeing the mansion from sheltered places like a thief, or a member of an Irish Brotherhood. It was a secret that on the occasion of the fifth of these visits (when, having left his horse at an obscure inn half a mile away, he had scaled the park-wall), he had been pounced upon by a wary gamekeeper, who prowling about without his gun was at no particular advantage, and not being at first amenable to reason had to be soundly thrashed and then propitiated with three sovereigns and the promise of more if he behaved himself in future. It was a secret also that a part of the reformed gamekeeper's good behaviour—for which Jack Clare gave him high credit, and afterwards, little as he could afford it, a five pound note—was the dexterous smuggling of a missive into the hands of Lady Caramel's maid, who in turn stuck it in the frame of the mirror in Ella's dressing-room. That Lady Ella found the note and knew the handwriting, that she cried over it and kissed it, and that she kept the rendezvous it prayed for, were secrets also, as they had a right to be.

I should like to describe the Lady Ella before we go further with the history of her love affairs. She was proud and tender, and at once enthusiastic and reserved. She was truer in friendship than ninety-nine girls in a hundred, and she was not merely pretty but downright lovely, so that she impressed with a sort of gentle splendour all who beheld her. Her eyes and hair were as dark as an Englishwoman's well can be; the rich blood mantled in her cheek with any touch of emotion at music, or a lofty thought, or the recital of a good deed; her lips were sweet, rosy, and mobile. She smiled rarely, seeing how young she was, but when her smile came it atoned for rarity. She was tall for a woman, and in mould full and fine, and there was an inbred refinement in her which could only come of many generations of gentle living and high thinking. A female novelist has told us recently that the word "Lady" is odious. For my part, I like the word so well that it seems worthy to describe this delightful and high-bred young Englishwoman. It is only amongst people of the great Anglo-Saxon race that human products so exquisite

are found, and there are few general possessions with which a rational patriot would not more readily part. A beautiful young woman is a benefaction to mankind at large, and when an old English stock flowers out in the full glory of perfect health and form and texture, with a nature serviceable and sweet to suit the frame it lives in, there is no wholesome human creature who can look upon that delicious growth without pleasure.

In spirit Jack Clare used to go upon his knees to her whenever he thought about her, and when, on this especial day, he saw her coming through the sunlit woods to meet him, she was like the creature of another sphere to him.

"Jack," she said, with only a half-reproach in her candid eyes, "this is wrong and foolish."

"Don't say that, dear," answered Jack appealingly.

"I must say it," she responded. "It is wrong, because you promised me——"

"I know," said Jack mournfully.

"It is foolish, because it pains you, and can do no good."

"Pains me?" said Jack, in tender scorn. "Pains me! If you knew how I love you, Ella, you would never think so!"

"Hush!" she said. "You must not talk so."

"I must," he answered. "I have come to make a last appeal, Ella. If you care at all to know it, and I think you do, I love you as I don't think a man ever loved a woman before. I must speak, darling, if it is for the last time. We have very little, but we have enough, and I have been thinking how slavish and poor it is to sit down here in this worn-out country and let the social weeds grow over us until they shut out our last glimpse of sunlight, when we might go away and be free and happy, and perhaps a little useful in the world. If I sell my commission and realise everything"—she raised her hand against him, but he took it in both his own and went on in spite of warning—"I shall have eleven thousand pounds, and with that in New Zealand, or Australia, or Manitoba, or wherever the chances are best and brightest, I could buy land and cultivate it, or rear sheep or cattle, and own more acres and have more money by-and-by than ever the Windgalls and the Montacutes owned in all their idle lives. Give me just a word of hope, darling, and I'll go out and work as many years as Jacob served Laban."

It seemed to him so possible, so reasonable, so natural that she should see his scheme as he saw it, that his grey eyes flashed with anticipations of triumph, and the diffidence with which he had begun melted into thin air.

"You pain yourself," she said, looking at him with eyes of pity. "Jack, dear,"—he held her hand still, and at this sweet address he thrilled and trembled; she had never spoken so since they were children—"if I seem cruel now it is only to save you from more pain and trouble. It is all quite hopeless and impossible." She did not shrink from his imploring eyes, though her heart ached as sorely as his own. "I must stay with my father till he sends me away."

"Till he marries you to some man you can never care for!" cried Jack; "some snob with money, Ella. You can't do it. You can't submit to it. It's against nature." Her glance reproached him, and he knew that it was scarcely manly to have spoken so. "I beg your pardon, darling. If I could see you happy I shouldn't mind so much."

"I came to see you, dear," she said steadily, "because I could tell you so much better than I could have written it. It is all quite hopeless and impossible. I can't break my father's heart, and I have to stay with him. Good-bye, Jack. The longer you delay the harder it will be to say it. Good-bye!"

There was no use in lingering, and he knew it, and yet he was fain to linger.

"Well," he said, summoning all the resolution his sore heart could hold, "good-bye. I shan't trouble you again. I'm not going to wear my heart on my sleeve for fools to laugh at. It's hard to say it, but good-bye. God bless you! Oh, God bless you!"

He kissed the gloved hand twice or thrice, and turned away Once, when he had gone a hundred yards, he looked back, and could see her standing amongst the trees where he had left her. She waved her hand to him, and he went on again. When next he turned the intervening trees had hidden her, and he could not tell that she was kneeling in the fern and crying. He did not think she loved him well enough for that—it seemed almost like a sacrilege of her to dare to think that she loved him at all.

He crept half-dispiritedly to his horse and rode to quarters, where he threw a boot at his batman, and sat smoking alone for hours in dogged misery. She went back to her hostess, dressed and dined, and sang and played after dinner, managing her griefs so well that nobody guessed them. They were as real as her lover's for all that, but it was better for him to think her cold to him than to break his heart because she was breaking hers.

CHAPTER V.

Mr. William Amelia found his lines in fairly pleasant places at the office of the *Gallowbay Whig*, but he occupied almost the whole of his leisure in looking about for avenues to fortune. Ambition spurred him, and he was ready to scorn delight and live laborious days. At present his sphere was narrow, and found but small employment for his energies. He had no great native tendency to study, and for a young man who had entered even upon the outskirts of the kingdom of literature he was amazingly ill-read. He knew nothing of history or of poetry or fiction. But in the parliamentary debates, and in the leading articles of the newspapers, there is a prodigious amount of scattered knowledge of a handy sort, and these supplied Mr. Amelia's mind with most of the pabulum it drew from foreign sources. With one little leg cocked over the other, and his small person, compact big head and up-standing hair obscured by an open sheet of the *Times*, he would skim through the debates with searching vision, and long to scarify this or the other honourable gentleman who ran his head against fact or common sense, or reasoned right from wrong premises or wrong from right ones. The young gentleman had had no training in logic, but he knew what the thing was notwithstanding, and false reasoning made him angry. He was often angry when he read the debates in Parliament, and felt, as Hamlet did, that the world was out of joint.

At these times of office leisure Mr. Flinch would sit in his respectable frock coat with his well-oiled hair fitting close to his head, and would practise shorthand.

"Ah say!" would Mr. Flinch exclaim, with an accent of triumph. "What d'ye think o' that for a phraseogram, Mr. Amelia? 'I have reason to believe that you have already received the articles in question.' Ah can write that in Pitman's system without takin' the pen off the paper."

"Indeed!" Mr. Amelia would respond, appearing from behind his *Times* as if he were getting out of bed, and then would glance at Mr. Flinch's invention, and return again.

Mr. Maddox, with his pipe in his mouth and his volume of fiction or of verse before him, would generally look up and laugh at these times.

"How often do you think you'll want to write that sentence, Flinch?"

"That's mah business," Mr. Flinch would answer.

"Don't you ever get tired of eating sawdust, Flinch?"

"Eating sawdust?" cries Flinch. "Nah, what's the fool talkin' about? Ah niver mentioned eating anything. I was talkin' abaht shorthand."

"So was I," from the satiric Maddox.

"You're a liar," responds Mr. Flinch, whose weapons of controversy are unpolished.

When things came to this pass, as they generally did, the seedy junior reporter would drop his book and burst into a shout of laughter disproportionate to the occasion. Then the mild Rider would enter from his own den and look about him for an explanation of the jest. A very small joke served to break the monotony of office life at the *Gallowbay Whig*.

"Flinch was born in Bœotia," said the junior, on one such occasion, "and was expelled by a catapult, so that he picked up no civilising influences by the way."

"Ah was born in Rotherham," Mr. Flinch answered, "and I niver was expelled from anywhere. And I won't have these things said abaht me. Mind that, Mr. Maddox."

Then the mild Editor made peace, when the disreputable junior had done laughing, and to soothe Mr. Flinch's wounded feelings invited him to dinner. Mr. Flinch, whose salary was not large and whose habits were enforcedly penurious, became gracious at the prospect of a dinner for nothing, and took airs of patronage with his subordinate. Mr. Rider, going back to the manufacture of his column of local notes, bethought him that it was invidious to bid one member of the staff to dinner and exclude the others, and after some battling with himself and many extricately figured reckonings of ways and means, shuffled into the reporters' room again and shyly asked the chief and the junior to be his guests on the same day. They accepting, he retired again, and went over his figures once more somewhat sadly, not seeing his way to an added expenditure of ten shillings, and dreading a domestic explosion.

Whatever domestic difficulties were encountered in the interim the dinner took place on the appointed Sunday at two o'clock, and the three reporters turned up in time, Mr. Amelia appearing in a tall hat and new gloves, Mr. Flinch scrupulously respectable as usual, and Mr. Maddox unexpectedly clean in honour of the ladies. Mrs. Rider was a thin and careworn woman, whose

constant complaint it was that her nose was never away from the grindstone. The actual feature was thin and red, as if the figure were to be taken literally, and the poor woman, who had a big family and a wofully small income, was much put to it to make ends meet. The three grown-up girls were present at table, and the members of the staff were introduced with his favourite manner of mildly humorous pomp by the editor. Junior members of the family were heard scuffling and fighting in an upper room, and once or twice, maddened by the knowledge that pastry was in the house, and stung by the unwonted presence of apples, nuts, and oranges for dessert, they broke into organised rebellion, and descended in a body. These outbreaks overwhelmed the girls with confusion, and threw the head of the house into great discomfort, and it was then that the junior showed himself worth his dinner, rattling off gay stories (gathered from many years' back numbers of the *Family Herald*, whose "Random Readings" supply a section of society with harmless facetiæ), and otherwise taking upon his own shoulders the burden of entertainment.

An incident occurred which made this dinner an historical point in the career of Mr. Amelia. It arose in this way. The ladies having withdrawn, and the editor and Mr. Maddox having each set his pipe going, the talk drifted about the public affairs of Gallowbay until mention of one Major Septimus Heard was made, and the junior was found to be suddenly choking with smoke and laughter. Being patted on the back by the editor he recovered, and assumed an aspect of preternatural gravity until Mr. Flinch, who naturally imagined that he was the object of any mirthful manifestation which might occur in his neighbourhood, took up the matter as being personal to himself, and demanded an explanation.

Being much enforced by Flinch, the junior at length drew from his pocket a copy of yesterday's paper and read gravely:

"The gallant Major concluded by observing, amidst great applause, that however it might recommend itself to the general opinion, it occurred to him that in goodness lay the only genuine nobility, that kind hearts were infinitely preferable to coronets, and that simple faith was more to be esteemed than Norman blood."

"Flinch," said the junior, beginning to gasp again, "has been editing Tennyson."

"What's the matter?" cried Mr. Flinch. "Ah've got it on my notes. It's what he said, Mr. Rider. Ah'll swear it's what

he said, only, of course, he didn't put it in such flowing language. I think," he added with a touch of pity, "Maddox is laughin'-mad. He's always on the grin."

"Dear me, Mr. Flinch," said the editor, putting on his glasses and reaching out for the paper. "This is a serious mistake—a very serious error. That is a verse of poetry. Quite a well-known verse of poetry. Dear me." He read it sadly and folded it upon his knees. "What makes it the more lamentable is the fact that Major Septimus Heard is sole proprietor of the *Whig*. That is a secret, gentlemen," he added a moment later, looking around him with a countenance of added distress, "which I ought never to have revealed. I was, in point of fact, pledged to secrecy about it, but the shock of this mistake—dear me. Gentlemen, I am sure I may rely upon you to respect Major Heard's wishes, though I have myself been betrayed into an inadvertence."

"If he'd only said, 'as the poet says,' ah'd have gone and asked him for the quotation," said Mr. Flinch defiantly; "but he didn't. He just reeled it off as if it was out of his own head. And you know what Pitman says, Mr. Rider—the function of a reporter is to make good speeches for bad speakers. That's what they call the peroration, and you always reckon to touch the peroration up a bit."

"Major Heard is a very precise man, indeed," said the editor, whose spirits were altogether dashed by the discovery.

"It's nothing, after all, sir," said the junior, trying to make light of it. "I oughtn't to have mentioned it, but it was nothing but a joke to me, and I thought we should all enjoy it. If he comes and makes a row about it, sir, tell him I did it. I don't mind."

"A knowledge of general literature," said the mild man, "is essential to journalistic pursuits."

"Ah don't think," said Mr. Flinch, with a vengeful look at the junior, "that a man can be expected to have literature at his fingers' ends for thirty shillings a week."

"No, Mr. Flinch," said the editor, "not for thirty shillings a week, but for the love of knowledge and the charms of fiction and the delights of poetry. My brother," he went on inoffensively, "had a very fine business connection as an ironmonger. He was entirely a self-made man, as I am"—Mr. Amelia smiled—"and he offered me a partnership in the concern; but though it restricted me to narrower means I preferred the literary life. There is not much pure literature in the conduct of a weekly newspaper," he added, with his own languid and weary smile;

"but there is a certain mental atmosphere in it, after all, which one would miss behind an ironmonger's counter. One feels conscious at times of directing the minds of the masses." His wandering glance fell upon the paper on his knees, and the look of distress his forehead had worn a minute or two before returned. "Dear me—this is a melancholy error. We will say no more about it now, but we must exercise greater vigilance in the future."

"I don't see how anybody cares to live without reading," said the blunder-headed junior, not meaning to tread on anybody's corns, but offending two out of the three who heard him. "If there were no books in the world I'd cut my throat."

Mr. Amelia said nothing, but it crossed his mind that in such a case the loss of literature would not be without its compensations. He was not a young man who liked to feel inferior, and he made up his mind that, much as he hated poetry, he must begin to read it as a duty.

"I'm sorry for poor old Rider," said the junior, when he and his chief left the editor's house pretty early in the afternoon. "The editorship of the *Whig* is a poor berth for a man with a big family. And he's really a man of very surprising learning. Good Latinist — fair Grecian — knows French and German thoroughly—knows Orr's 'Circle of the Sciences' by heart. You can't mention an event in history but he knows the date of it."

"General knowledge is a good thing, no doubt," said Mr. Amelia; "but what's the use of having a bag of tools if you don't know how to handle them? Money's a good thing, but it isn't serviceable on a desert island. Mr. Rider can't use his tools. He has gone to live on a desert island—one might suppose that he was born there—and there's nothing to buy for all the coins he has gathered." He walked as if he had deluded himself into the belief that he was seven feet high. "A man's mind must be naturally expert," he said, "before any of the tools of knowledge can be useful to him. The expert man" (he was thinking of himself) "can make use of rough and simple tools. The clumsy-minded man may be furnished with the most delicate appliances for labour, but he can do nothing."

"Rider isn't a clumsy-minded man, by any means," said Maddox; and this observation awoke Mr. Amelia to the danger of reposing too much confidence in the junior. "He writes very charming verses."

"Mr. Rider was not in my mind when I used the expression,"

said Mr. Amelia, unblushingly. "The aphorism was general, and was not intended for particular application."

That sentence was a quotation from Friday's *Times*, and it came in usefully. Mr. Amelia learned a great deal in later years, and before he reached his present exalted position his native dexterity of mind had made informal studies profitable to him; but at that time he could not have told you with any clearness what he supposed an aphorism to be. It was a good alternative word for "remark," or "observation," and it gave an air of finish to the sentence. Mr. Amelia, who had no great mental stock as yet, contrived as good a show for the shop window as his neighbours. He was alert in the search for showy goods; but he was never audacious and rarely adventurous in displaying them, so that when they went into the window they looked natural there, and persuaded the observer that a large assortment might be found within.

Now this art of seeming to know a great deal whilst knowing very little is pre-eminently the journalistic art, and Mr. Amelia had done well in selecting journalism as his profession. No man can long pursue the calling without learning much (though the cram of to-day drives out the cram of yesterday as often as not), but it is not necessary to know anything an hour before you handle it for the edification of the world. What Sir Blaise Delorme believed was "much, but nowise certain," and a practised journalist's knowledge is like Sir Blaise's belief. Mr. Amelia looked for success with an eye almost prophetic in its certainty of vision, but he did not know as yet how curiously qualified he was to attain it.

He and the junior parted, and he went home thinking chiefly of Rider's unfitness for practical struggle with the world. That he could discover a verse of a popular poem even in the disguise of newspaper English was but a poor compensation for his want of energy and knowledge of the world. What a much smarter paper the *Whig* might be if edited by William Amelia than it now was—edited by John Hawkes Rider! Mr. Maddox had surprised a secret which might be useful to Mr. Amelia, and the little man turned it over in his mind. He had once or twice inquired after the proprietors—Mr. Rider had always spoken of proprietors—and he had been met with mystery. Now, Major Septimus Heard was a well-known figure in Gallowbay, and it was said that at the next election he would contest the borough in the Liberal interest. It was known that he had already expressed his intention to retire from active military duties. It would

undoubtedly be useful to Mr. Amelia that Major Heard should know that he had an energetic, smart, and attentive man as chief of his reporting staff; and here was an opportunity for letting him know it.

It befell next morning that Major Septimus Heard, who was in temporary command of his regiment at Bryanstowe, sat at breakfast in his own quarters with Jack Clare as his guest. Jack and the Major were staunch friends, and the elder was greatly esteemed by the younger, who regarded him as being in all things the very soul of honour, and made his judgment a final court of appeal in many things, as ingenuous young officers will with seniors whom they trust and like. The Major was elderly, and was thought by some of the youngsters of the regiment a shade too grave for a good fellow. He had a long hook nose, a grizzled head, and a great sweeping grey moustache which he habitually fondled with his left hand. He was terrible to evil-doers, and in the frequent absence of the lieutenant-colonel, who was often on the sick-list, old offenders trembled at the prospect of appearing in the orderly-room, whilst first offenders were held to be lucky in coming before him.

"Light up," said the Major, thrusting a box of cigars across the table, "and if you don't mind I'll have a look at my letters."

Jack selected a cigar and pushed back the box. The Major helped himself also, and for the space of two or three minutes there was silence, till on a sudden the senior officer arose with a profane ejaculation.

"Hillo!" said his companion. "Anything the matter?"

Major Heard read to the end of the letter which had so disturbed him, and then gravely dropped it before Jack Clare.

"Read that," he said.

"It's marked 'private and confidential,'" said Jack.

"Never mind that," replied the Major. "Read it." Jack began. "Read it aloud," said the Major; "let us enjoy it together."

"Sir," read Jack, "as Chief Reporter of the *Gallowbay Whig*, I was greatly annoyed to observe the absurd close of the report of your excellent speech which appears in this day's issue of that journal. The report was unfortunately entrusted to a subordinate member of the staff, who was ignorant of the verse you quoted. I beg to assure you that no such solecism shall again occur. That it should have occurred at all naturally points to incompetence in more than one direction. I learn from Mr.

Rider that you are proprietor of the *Gallowbay Whig*, and I venture to submit to you that Mr. Rider's business as a stationer and general printer absorbs somewhat too much of his time to permit of his giving such full attention to its affairs as the prosperity of the journal demands. If you should regard the application I now venture to make in a favourable light, I shall be glad to devote the whole of my time and attention to the interests of the journal. It is a matter of public rumour that at the next election you will contest the borough in the Liberal interest, and if this rumour be justly founded, it is all the more essential that the editor of the *Whig* should be abreast of the times. I am not aware of the rate at which Mr. Rider's services are remunerated, but I shall be happy to undertake the position he occupies, and to accept a reduction of his salary to the extent of twenty-five per cent.

"I am, Sir, yours very truly,
"WILLIAM AMELIA."

"That," said the Major, pulling at his moustache as if it were a bell-rope, "is what is called by the working-classes 'ratting,' which does not mean to hunt rats, but to play the rat. The phrase appears to me to be just and appropriate."

"What shall you do about it?" asked Clare, throwing the letter on the table.

"I shall send it to Rider," said the Major, grimly.

"Won't that be rather nasty for the fellow that wrote the letter?" Jack demanded. "Besides, he marks it 'private.'"

"Do you tell me, Captain Clare," cried the grizzled Major, "that you would respect the appeal for privacy from an assassin like this, sir? A snake in the grass, begad, sir, who—who bites the hand that feeds him? Why, sir, would you believe it, this man Rider, who is a very estimable man indeed, a very estimable man, has held the position for twelve years, and he gave this young man, who now addresses me, employment? Gave employment, sir, to the man who now tries to undermine him! Respect his appeal for privacy, sir? No. I will teach the young man a lesson."

With that he cleared a space upon the table, and setting down a writing desk upon it proceeded, with occasional ejaculations of "low scoundrel" and "I'll teach the fellow," to write two notes, which, when finished, he read aloud, with fiery emphasis. The first was addressed to Mr. Amelia, and ran thus:

"SIR,

"I have forwarded your polite letter to Mr. Rider.

"SEPTIMUS HEARD."

The second read: "My dear Rider, I received the enclosed this morning, and have no more respect for the writer's desire for secrecy than I should have if I saw him trying to pick another man's pocket in a more usual way. I have informed him of the fact that I have forwarded this letter to you. I may take this opportunity of expressing my most cordial approval of the manner in which the *Whig* is conducted." And then, "I am, my dear Rider, yours sincerely," followed by the signature of a man who writes with a broad quill in angry earnest. Having declaimed these epistles, with much striding to and fro, and frequent wavings of his cigar, the Major strode to the table and dashed off a postscript. "Give the fellow a month's wages and send him about his business." This he also declaimed, and having enveloped the letters, rang his bell, and on the servant's appearance ordered him to the post at once. "Begad, sir," he cried, turning upon Jack Clare, who was smiling at the Major's wrath, "that any man should dare to address such an epistle to me is an insult to my honour. Does the fellow take me for a huckster with his infernal bribe of twenty-five per cent. Confound him!"

When on that same Monday afternoon Mr. Rider met the postman at his door and took from his hand two letters addressed in the character of Major Septimus Heard, he felt that his time had come. He was by nature a nervous and self-distrustful man, and he was persuaded within himself that the proprietor had sent him his dismissal, and had by the same post conferred brevet rank upon Mr. Amelia. There was no other hypothesis on which he could ground a reason for the two letters, and for a time he feared to open his own. Then it occurred to him that Mr. Amelia was upstairs in the office, and he might perhaps venture a guess as to the nature of his own letter if the Chief Reporter read his first. So with a fast-beating heart he ascended the narrow staircase and pushed aside the door.

"A letter for you, Mr. Amelia."

The handwriting was strange to Mr. Amelia, and he opened the envelope with no emotion, but reading the contents of the letter at a glance he started, and stared at Rider with so curious an aspect that the poor man took his fears for certainties, and moved dejectedly with bent head into his own den. When at

last he dared to open the missive addressed to himself the first words that met his eye were, "cordial approval of the manner in which the *Whig* is conducted." Was it all a mistake, then? He read the letter and its postscript and then turned to the enclosure. This fairly staggered him, because to his simple and unselfish mind it looked like perfidy, and he had never met anybody who had acted perfidiously before. He did not know how to deal with the case, and the thought of meeting Mr. Amelia and putting him to further shame was intolerable to his meek and easy-going nature. It seemed to him inevitable that a man detected in such a proceeding should be ashamed, but he did not take it into his scheme of the thing at all that Mr. Amelia might think otherwise.

That young gentleman's mental attitude was one of almost unmitigated amazement. He was shocked—unaffectedly shocked at the conduct of Major Septimus Heard, and for a moment his belief in human rectitude was scattered; but his amazement transcended the shock. Major Heard was spoken of by everybody as a man of honour! That he himself had done a mean thing did not even occur to him. Probably it was impossible that such an idea should approach him in any circumstances, for he was quite persuaded that if a thing seemed mean to him he would not do it. Of course he had not desired the editor to know of his efforts to supplant him, however it might have turned out; but his offer was a fair one and in the way of business, and he felt bitterly that a confidential communication had been shamelessly abused. Well! he would know better with whom to trust the secret of his desires in future! Major Septimus Heard and Mr. Rider were probably friends, and being friends were probably birds of a feather. It was a pity to have sacrificed his place, for he saw clearly that he would have to go. Taking it altogether he felt as if he had been martyred.

It is a little curious, seeing for what a length of time the world has been going, that there never has been any serious recognition of the fact that Virtue is the most fluid of all qualities. Did it ever enter the mind of any philosopher to say that virtue is identical with self-approval? If a man were conscious of no inward virtue he would die. Even remorse raises a man to the height of his own heart, and tells him that there is something in him which can rebel at baseness, though the baseness be his own.

Mr. Amelia felt that he had been betrayed.

When the shy, mild editor at last found strength of mind

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to creep from his den and laid Major Heard's letter before him, together with its enclosure, he felt ill at ease and humiliated, but undeservedly. When Mr. Rider, without a word, handed him an open cheque for eight pounds, drawn on the Gallowbay Bank, he understood that this was his dismissal, and went his way. He cashed the cheque, and called at the post-office on his way to his lodgings. There he procured an order for two pounds, the promised quarter of his salary. He wrote a dutiful letter to his mother, telling her that his engagement at the *Gallowbay Whig* had come to an unfortunate close; that he had a little money in hand, and sent her a share of it, and assured her of his best efforts for her future and his own. Then he packed up his small belongings, paid his landlady an arranged percentage on her claim for a week's notice, and took train for London.

"I have learned a lesson," he said to himself; and truly, though it was not the lesson many men would have learned. "This need not turn out a misfortune, after all. At any rate, I can try one back fall with London."

CHAPTER VI.

Fleet Street (the ear of England) listens day and night to the clicking of electric messengers, who travel over great tracts of land, and under ocean spaces, with tidings of peace and war, of the coronations and deaths of kings, of the rise in jute and the fall in indigo. Keen-faced men sitting walled away from the constant racket of traffic, say to the special correspondent "go," and straightway he goeth, to New York, to Vienna, to Timbuctoo, to Kamschatka, to the celebration of a century of republican freedom, to the silver wedding of a royal couple, to famine, pestilence, or war. And the keen-faced men say to the leader-writer "come," and he cometh, and at the word of command sitteth down to teach Ministers the art of government, generals the art of war, and the whole race of grandmothers the art of sucking eggs. Here the great human passion of Gossip, cramped no longer, finds room and breathing space. The world tells Fleet Street everything, and Fleet Street tells the world again, with tagged surmises, comments, diatribes, and exhortations. There are in Fleet Street full a hundred temples to this great human passion of gossip, and in every one of them, the

great high priest, and all the lesser priests, and all the acolytes (called reporters), listen and babble, listen and babble, listen and babble without ceasing from one year's end to another.

Mr. Amelia, passing through Temple Bar for the first time, knew that he had come upon these magic precincts, and his keen glance wandered hither and thither as he walked, reading the names of scores of journals, to the fortunes of any one of which he was willing to attach himself.

"The traditional Lord Mayor," he said to himself, "always comes to London with one half-crown in his pocket. I start with forty and a spare twopence."

He felt in his waistcoat pocket for his solitary five-pound note, and assured himself of its continued presence there. He trod the pavement like a gamecock, and felt that he had come to conquer. He was resolved to conquer, but resolution gave him no cue, and he could not guess where to attack. He walked until he came to Ludgate Hill, and standing at the foot saw and recognised the great dome of St. Paul's. He needed these occasional reminders to assure him that he was really in London.

The Farringdon Road was useless to him, the Blackfriars Road offered him nothing, Ludgate was barren for his purposes. He turned back towards Temple Bar and took the footpath on the right-hand side. Here he jostled against a great author, whom he recognised by his likeness to the published portraits of him, and that momentary contact seemed a thing of good omen. A moment later he saw the name of a certain chop-house inscribed upon a lamp which hung over a narrow, covered way; a house famous among pressmen for a generation or two, and even at this day supposed in country places to harbour the very genius of journalism, though in reality the tide of fashion has fallen away from it and left it high and dry. Bohemia's citadel is deserted. The great MacGuffog, the amiable Dexter, supposed to know by heart the reference library at the Museum, and crowned king of ready writers; Wobbler of the droll wit and strident voice, fresh from the law courts with a new story of how he had set down the Bench, and now away to write his daily funny leader;—these and many of the rest are yet alive, but the clubs have caught them, or they love the home arm-chair too well to leave it for the sawdusted floor and the bleared gleam of the gas that winks against the dreary daylight in that old resort. You may as well seek the big-wigged guests of the days of Queen Anne, who, as almost everybody knows, are dead and buried, like their royal mistress.

In Mr. Amelia's first days in London the house was still the occasional resort of people eminent in the journalistic world, and it was not without reasonable hope of rubbing shoulders with some one or two of them that he entered, and standing at the cramped little bar-window—varnished now like the guests who used to stand about it—demanded a glass of pale ale, and paid his twopence. A portly man, with brown eyes full of fun, was telling a story to half-a-dozen listeners, who gathered close to catch the subdued tones of the narrator, and every now and again broke away from him to laugh with bent shoulders and stamping feet. Mr. Amelia, arguing from the brown eyes and the look of humour, thought this might possibly be the great Dexter, but suddenly the narrator broke off short with a cry of "Dexter, come here," and the novice saw the great man, mild-eyed, white-waistcoated, with a flower at his buttonhole. The other, who could thus familiarly hail him, must certainly be somebody out of the common. Whilst the story was retold, the undersized, red-headed waiter scattered the group without concern, and flung unintelligible orders upstairs, while chop-house guests, full or hungry, jostled them on their way to or from the eating-room.

By-and-by two new-comers, who nodded familiarly at the great ones—assuredly great because in Dexter's company—attracted Mr. Amelia's attention, and their conversation, which was carried on in a loud tone, became interesting to him.

"Ye tould me," said one, "that Barney was out o' collar."

"So he is," said the other, "and in deadly low water tew."

"Anybody might know you were a poet," said the first, "be the lovely mingling of your similes. What's he doin'?"

"Oi left 'm chewin' his silver toothpick. Divil the thing else is left 'm to chew."

"Gammon!" cried the first speaker. "What's a man want to sit down for, and grind his teeth for need o' grist in London? A journalist that knows his way about is loike Autolycus, me boy, if ever ye heard o' the gentleman. There's matter for a hot brain everywhere. Every lane's end, every shop, church, session, hanging, yields a careful man work. If I were out o' collar, what do ye think I'd do? Sit down and chew a toothpick? Not I, when there's half-a-guinea to be earned for an occasional note for the *Piccadilly*—a stickful o'matter, and no more."

"That's all right," said the second; "but where to find the stickful?"

"Where to find it? Anywhere! Prowl round St. Paul's till

ye find a statue with its nose knocked off. Then go to the Readin' Room at the British Museum, and find out all about the broken nose's original, and do twelve lines of public virtue in English, lamenting the decay into which the memorial of the hero, or divine, or whatever he is, has been allowed to fall. Work at the thing for a week, if you loike. Dew an orticle about it, chopped into nice little pars, so that the editor can stick 'em in among the notes. When ye've done that, come to me and I'll give y' a tip a day for twelve months, gratis. There's just one little requirement they have at that same office of the *Piccadilly*, though, an' maybe Barney's a little weak-kneed there."

"What is it?"

"English. The well of English undefoiled, me choild. Not Reportese, but English pure and simple!—unadorned, like this." He held up his glass and eyed it fondly. "Bill," he said, with sudden feeling—he had spoken until now with a light and almost sportive manner—"it's the best whisky in London."

Mr. Amelia finished his modest glass of bitter beer, and found himself again in Fleet Street, conscious that he had not invested his twopence unworthily. He felt inclined to run to St. Paul's Cathedral, lest the unknown Barney should be before him. Half-a-guinea for a dozen lines! Could that stupendous news be true? London was indeed paved with gold if one had the eyes to see it. Autolycus—if that were the name of the person whom the Irish gentleman had mentioned—was undoubtedly right. Matter for a hot brain everywhere—every lane's end yielding work! He would buy the *Piccadilly* before he wrote a line, would study it, and master its style. English? Well, he thought he could write English. That is a common delusion.

There were no statues with broken noses in St. Paul's, but there were some signs of dilapidation and decay, which he carefully noted—quite enough to justify the call of popular attention. Some of the worthies whose monuments were thus neglected he had heard of, others were strange to him, but he booked them all, and got away to the British Museum Library in time to find it closed. His journey, however, was not altogether fruitless, for he learned the form of the necessary application for a reader's ticket, and sent it in that evening. All night and all next day, whilst by a temporary permit he explored the library shelves, he was haunted by the visionary Barney. Any of the men who sat at the silent stalls reading and writing might be Barney; and one of the cluster of

ladies might be his *locum tenens*, his wife, sister, or other feminine aid.

He wrote his notes on the neglected memorials in the library itself, and he trimmed them as well as he could. At Gallowbay he had been told that he wrote a fair sub-leader, and before Gallowbay he had felt himself warranted in advertising himself as a smart paragraphist; but between the provinces and London there is a gulf, and the thought that he was writing for the *Piccadilly* made him nervous, and almost for the first time in his life self-distrustful. This, however, was so unaccustomed a sensation, and so little native to him, that it soon withered, and as he walked to the office of the journal, bearing his copy and a neat little letter to the editor, his spirits rose higher and higher, until it seemed that the baseness of Major Septimus Heard had really made the fortune of the Major's victim. He handed his small packet to an uninterested boy behind a counter, and went home to await the result. He bought the *Piccadilly* that evening and next day with no effect but that of disappointment, and had began to nourish the poorest opinion of the judgment of the famous journalist who presided over its destinies. But on the third day he ventured another penny, and lo! he was in type in a London journal. A fig for Gallowbay! A fico for the world and worldlings base—like Major Septimus Heard. It dashed him a little to find his superfine sentences all rewritten, but his hand was still recognisable, and when the first sense of chagrin was over he set himself to discern the difference between his draft and the printed paragraph, and to make out the reason of it. To believe in himself so profoundly as he did and yet have common sense and humility enough for that argued well for his chances of advancement. He told himself so, though in another way.

"I wonder if that gentleman is still chewing his silver toothpick," he said, with a triumphant sense of humour, when he thought of the visionary Barney, probably still out of collar. It seemed something of a wonder to him that he had ever fancied it worth his while to be editor of the *Gallowbay Whig*, when in his first three days in London he had been able to find foothold in a place so lofty.

This question of public monuments could not yet be worn out, and he decided to exploit it thoroughly. Westminster Abbey should be his next stalking-ground.

His little cuffs and his collar were spotlessly white and irreproachably unwrinkled, his own hands had polished his neat

little boots, *à merveille*, his hat was brushed, and his umbrella was rolled with scrupulous exactness. The day, for London, was lovely, and Mr. Amelia, though he took little note of the manifestations of nature either in town or country, was sensible to her influences, and walked the more briskly for the brightness of the weather. He reached the stately old pile, and plunged into it businesslike, intent on ten and sixpence per paragraph. The organ was rolling a solemn wind of sound, and the voices of the choir-boys were soaring in it, while the echoes murmured of the peace which only dwells within hearing of choir and organ in sacred places. Peace has many moods, but the peace of the abbey and the cathedral is theirs alone. With his hat in one hand and his umbrella in the other, Mr. Amelia paced the various aisles, and kept a keen eye on the main chance, but by-and-by a verger laid a hand on him, and directed him to be seated until the service should be over. Obeying this injunction, and beguiling the time by an examination of the scattered worshippers, he became aware of Mr. Bolsover Kimberley, who sat, with his shy whiskers drooping, and his meek eyes turned towards the roof, on a bench to Mr. Amelia's right. He was attired in gorgeous raiment, in which he would have looked as appropriate perhaps beneath the light of the sacred lamp of burlesque, as in that of the stained windows of the Abbey, but his mood was unmistakably devotional. He had forgotten himself and his clothes and the dreadful weight of his money, and he was away on the wings of the music as high as his heart could carry him. His figure was very meekly curled, the tips of his toes just reached the floor, and his gloved hands lay in his lap. He smiled feebly at the ceiling, and there was a glint of moisture in his eyes.

A month or two ago, Mr. Amelia, whose high sense of his own deserving did not prompt him to a ready belief in the deserts of other people, would have snubbed Mr. Kimberley if he had encountered him, and Kimberley would have accepted the snubbing as his due. But now, though he knew his history, and though he had often thought despitefully of him, and thought his attitude at this moment ludicrous, there was a dignity in the sense of the man's possessions which made it difficult to despise him. Mr. Amelia felt that if he had inherited money he could have carried it with a better grace, but you can gild a man so thickly with a million and a quarter sterling that you can half cover the defects, even of a creature like Kimberley.

When the service came to an end, the little millionnaire wiped his eyes furtively and with a look of shame, and then glancing about him met the eyes of Mr. William Amelia. He recognised him with a blush and a forward duck of the head, and Mr. Amelia responded by advancing with outstretched hand.

"Lovely weather, Mr. Kimberley," he said. "I had the pleasure of meeting you in Gallowbay at the 'Windgall Arms.'"

"Yes," said Kimberley, shaking hands, "I remember. Beautiful place this is, sir, isn't it?"

"Gloomy," said Mr. Amelia, glancing round.

"Oh, do you think so?" asked Kimberley. "I should have thought a literary gentleman would appreciate it."

"Noble building," responded Mr. Amelia, "undoubtedly. One of the finest specimens of ecclesiastical architecture in the world. But—gloomy."

"I don't think," said Kimberley, "it would be so nice if it wasn't gloomy." Then he shrank within himself, fearing to be thought sentimental. To Mr. Amelia the place was big and rather ill-lighted, and there was an end of the matter; but to Kimberley there was majesty and the sacred peace of age in the stone vistas and the lofty roof, though he could not say so, and would not have dared even had he been able.

It was a constant habit of Mr. Amelia's to put himself shoulder to shoulder with anybody he encountered in a position better than his own, and to ask himself in what way they adorned the station more than he himself would have done. Concerning Kimberley, such a question could of course find but one answer. The man was a snob—gild him as thickly as you pleased, he would remain a snob—he had the accent, the aspect, the taste in dress of a snob. Mr. Amelia naturally regarded all men from a lofty standpoint, but it was a little hard on the world at large to be contrasted with William Amelia, when William Amelia settled not only the world's demerits but his own deservings.

However undeserving Kimberley might be, he had still a million and a quarter; and though his momentary companion had no hope of drawing from him one penny of his money, and though he honestly despised the money's owner, he was yet glad to know him, and would have been pleased to be seen in his society. It flattered him that Kimberley followed him when he moved away and began to inspect the monuments, and to enter short-hand observations of them in the big reporter's note-book he carried.

"I suppose that's short-hand, sir," said the millionnaire to the reporter, in a respectful murmur. The reporter nodded crisply and went on with his notes. How many things there were in the world, thought Kimberley, of which he knew nothing, and could never hope to know anything! If only his money had come sooner!—if he had been born with it, and had been so reared and taught that he could fill the place it set him in!

He followed Mr. Amelia about whilst that young gentleman completed his tour of the place, and now and again the inspector of monuments dropped him a crisp word or two about the more decayed ones. The history of the Abbey is readily accessible at the Museum Library, and Mr. Amelia, who had been at it the day before, knew a good deal about the place —knew it for the moment, that is, reporter's fashion—and Kimberley had unquestioning faith. It was very kind of so clever a young man to take notice of him. He felt this the more strongly because Mr. Amelia was not respectful, as almost everybody had been since he became a millionnaire. He was not used to being treated with consideration, and the self-ingratiatory kotowings with which people greeted him made him miserable. It was refreshing to meet one man who treated him as he had always been used to be treated, who thought him of no particular account and was simply civil with him.

When the walk was over Kimberley followed Mr. Amelia still, and, being by this time almost at his ease, ventured to beg a favour.

"I don't know whether it's in your line, sir," he said, "but if you would be so good as to answer a letter for me I should be very much obliged to you."

Mr. Amelia intimated that at this moment his time was unusually valuable.

"Oh!" said Kimberley, ill at ease again, "I shouldn't dream of asking a professional gentleman to give me his time for nothing."

"A guinea," said Mr. Amelia, tentatively, "is the lowest usual professional charge." If the millionnaire shied at that, an abatement might be made.

"Yes," said Kimberley readily. "A guinea? Oh yes, with pleasure. It'll be worth a five-pound note to me to 'ave it off my mind, I'm sure, if you'll be so good as to do it for me."

Mr. Amelia felt that he had suffered from his own modesty. The sensation was novel and disagreeable.

"Will you kindly come to my hotel, sir?" asked Kimberley.

"I could have got a professional gentleman to do it, a week ago, but I didn't know where to go to get it done, and it isn't nice to have to explain things, is it? At least, I don't suppose you'd mind it."

He blushed and rubbed his gloved fingers together.

"What is the nature of the letter you wish me to answer?" asked Mr. Amelia in a business tone. Kimberley stopped in the street to grope in his breast pocket, and, producing a letter, handed it to his companion. The little man took it, stuck his neatly-folded umbrella under his arm, and walked on slowly, reading as he went. Horatio Nelson Blandy addressed his dear Mr. Kimberley to the effect that his fellow-townsmen of Gallowbay had thought fit (in view of the amicable relations which had for years subsisted between Kimberley and himself) to nominate him as chairman of a committee which had for its purpose the organisation of a public reception on a grand scale —including fireworks and a banquet—of their eminent townsman, than whom, &c. Mr. Amelia skipped the compliments. That the committee begged Mr. Kimberley to name his own day, and assured him of the deep and widespread gratification with which the inhabitants of his native town, &c.

"This is the hotel, sir," said Kimberley, as Mr. Amelia folded the letter and returned it to its envelope. The manager stood in the hall and bowed and rubbed his hands at Mr. Kimberley. The waiters and the hall-porter bowed also, and a gorgeous lady in a glass case smirked and nodded. The little millionnaire and his little visitor went upstairs side by side, and a waiter in the first-floor corridor beholding them ran forward and opened the door of a magnificent solitary apartment gorgeous with mirrors and ormolu, a Turkey carpet and furniture upholstered in amber satin. Mr. Amelia had never before seen such a chamber, and if its accustomed guest had been at all in accordance with it, he would have been bowed down in spirit before the furniture. But Kimberley was a snob, and Mr. Amelia was still possessed of his own soul.

"Do you desire to accept this invitation?" asked Mr. Amelia, setting his hat and umbrella on the table.

"No," said Kimberley, with an air of alarmed decision. "I couldn't—rea'ly. No. I want you, please, to write a letter saying I'm very much obliged, but I can't accept a public reception. I couldn't bear it. And say, please, how obliged I feel. They'll put it in both the papers," said Kimberley, with a miserable aspect, "and that's what I am so particular for. But

you write for the papers regular, and you'll know what to say."

Mr. Amelia is older now by several years than he was when he first entered upon life in London, and his ideas of literary grace have undergone some change, but at that date he was under the impression that long words were always to be preferred to short ones. Kimberley rejoiced in the roll of the imposing sentences when their author read them over, and felt that anything he might do or leave undone must seem good to those who heard his intentions announced in tones so lofty. Even Mr. Amelia, who got through the business with the modest confidence of a man to whom such an effort was an affair of every day, was pleased with his own workmanship. When Kimberley sat down to transcribe the letter from Mr. Amelia's dictation, he felt almost affectionate in his gratitude to his assistant, and the long words looked splendid in the trim legal hand in which he set them down. But when he regretted, clerically, that an acceptance of the committee's generous and flattering proposal would be incompatible with engagements upon which he had already entered, he felt a twinge of conscience, and paused, with the end of the penholder between his teeth, to remember that he had entered into no engagement whatever. But suddenly, as stronger men have done before him, he determined to atone for a venial falsehood by a good deed to follow, and he wrote on elaborately until the end of the final paragraph.

"There's something else which I should like to add, sir," he said then. "I think there might be a banquet—to the poor people in the town." It warmed him to think of it, but his heart was not so warm as his cheeks. He blushed as he spoke, and felt generously ashamed.

"A sop to Cerberus," said Mr. Amelia to himself. He did not know who Cerberus was, but the phrase was warranted, and came from his *vade-mecum*, the *Times*. "He's afraid to go, but he wants to be popular." He took his pen once more and added a polysyllabic sentence or two.

"Whilst regretting my personal inability to be present at the proposed festivities, I should nevertheless be rejoiced if a scheme could be proposed which would render their abandonment unnecessary. Such a scheme might perhaps be found in a general invitation to the respectable indigent population of Gallowbay to a banquet to be given in my name and at my expense. Should this proposal meet the approval of the gentle-

men who have so generously addressed me, I shall conceive myself especially honoured if they will kindly undertake the preparation of the feast."

"Ask Mr. Blandy to take the chair, please," said Kimberley, when Mr. Amelia had read this out to him.

"And," murmured Mr. Amelia, as he wrote, "if anything could add to the gratification your acceptance of this modified arrangement would convey to me, it would be the intelligence that you yourself had consented to preside upon an occasion so interesting."

"I think I'd stop at 'preside,'" suggested Kimberley. Mr. Amelia made the alteration. His client took up his pen in turn, and the copy was fairly written.

"I'm very much obliged to you, I'm sure, sir," said the millionnaire, surveying the letter with a charmed eye. "I shall be glad if you don't 'appen to 'ave any change," he added awkwardly, as he blushingly drew forth his pocket-book and passed a five-pound note across the table to Mr. Amelia. That gentleman accepted it as if the crisp leaves lay as thickly in his own path as in Kimberley's.

"You are a generous paymaster, Mr. Kimberley," he said, as he pocketed the note.

"Well, I'm very much obliged to you," answered the blushing Kimberley, "and I'm sure you've expressed what I wanted to say beautiful. And," he added awkwardly, "it isn't anything to me—not now."

A millionnaire! thought Mr. Amelia. And a snob into the bargain! A snob inside and out. A most ostentatious snob. But poor Kimberley had meant no more by this clumsy sentence than to say that he was really paying very little for a valuable service. Luckily, he had no idea of the scorn he had excited, and parted from Mr. Amelia with renewed profession of thanks, having first secured his address in case he should need to write any more letters which were likely to be published.

Then, having taken luncheon, he walked to the jeweller's to consult him concerning a scarf-pin he had ordered. This especial article of jewellery is worth a word, partly because it had an influence on Kimberley's career, and partly for its intrinsic merit. It was a bulldog's head, carved in lava, and not quite life-size. The dog's eyes were represented by rubies, and the collar was of gold and brilliants. From the collar depended a chain of gold which could be attached to the lower part of the pin to secure it when it was

stuck in the scarf, so that any marauder who might covet it would have to snatch scarf and all before he could make away with it.

This egregious jewel was of his own designing, and was of a piece with his general notions of how a millionnaire should attire himself. He was audacious in the matter of personal adornment, and the courage with which he went ahead of his time in neckties was like that of desperation. He hooped and cabled and bolted himself with rings and chains and pins, for by this time he was in full command of his fortune, and at any hour of the day he was pawnable for five hundred pounds.

With all this he was trying to acquire something of the ways of men of the world, and the attempt made him very unhappy. He walked in the Row, and people stared at him and pointed him out one to another. This made him miserable, for he had neither *savoir faire* nor the insolence which passes for it. He had found some companions, but no friends, and in their society he had eaten luxurious dinners and had drunk rare wines. His companions enjoyed them, and he paid for them, and they made him ill. He smoked cigars of the finest brands, and they disagreed with him. He began to learn riding, and he suffered; he began to learn billiards, and he lost.

He was a coward; and yet every day of his life he faced dangers as great to him as those of the battle-field would have been, for nothing could have struck a keener terror to his soul than to face the ordinary passengers in the street when he had glorified himself with all the most extravagant devices he could think of. He felt this terror now, and he dodged into the jeweller's shop like a guilty creature. At the very instant at which he entered the door a cab drew up at the kerbstone, and a passenger leapt from it carrying something in his hands, and jostled against Kimberley. This was a day for meetings. The little millionnaire looked round apologetically, and confronted the Earl of Windgall.

His lordship, though commonly self-possessed enough, looked like a man detected in a theft, and shook hands with a tremor and confusion which were obvious even to Kimberley.

"Can you spare me half an hour?" asked his lordship. "Excuse me for a moment." He hurried into the shop, placed upon the counter the little package he carried, and positively stammered at the shopman whilst he fumbled for his card. "Take care of that. It is valuable. I am pressed for time just now, but I will call to-morrow and give instructions."

"Yes, my lord," said the shopman, catching sight of the name upon the card and bowing.

"Can you spare me a word or two, Mr. Kimberley?" asked Windgall, with a return to his ordinary manner.

"Certainly, my lord," said Kimberley, nervously.

"Where shall we go?" asked his lordship lightly. "Shall we drive to my club?"

"Will you come to my hotel, my lord?" asked Kimberley, wondering what my lord would have to say to him, and altogether fluttered by this unexpected encounter.

Windgall assented, and they drove away together.

CHAPTER VII.

The Earl of Windgall was in very serious trouble when he met Kimberley. He had been in serious trouble for a long time, but within the last eight-and-forty hours things had grown almost desperate for him. When Messrs. Begg, Batter, and Bagg, who were among the safest and least venturesome of financial advisers, had set an actual limit to the poor peer's borrowings, and had told him that he had come to the end of his tether, he had borrowed without their knowledge, and at heavy interest, from a member of the friendly tribes resident in Gallowbay—a thing sufficiently indiscreet in every way. A judicious man would never borrow at his own gates if he could help it, but the Earl was so pressed that he had not time to be judicious. In borrowing he had even felt himself impelled to disguise certain facts which were perfectly well known to the lender, and were accounted for in the scheme of interest, but unfortunately their concealment gave the creditor a power over his debtor. There is an offence known to the English law as the Obtaining of Money under False Pretences, and if the Earl of Windgall had not actually been guilty of that offence he had sailed so near it that in his inmost heart he felt guilty. He had been a proud and honourable man, and hunted by less pressing financial troubles he would have been proud and honourable still. There is the pity of it. This is the curse of poverty, that it blunts the keen edge of honour and lowers the standard of honest pride.

Mr. Clarence G. Sheeney was not a monster of fiction, but a modern Israelite of British breeding. He was a fattish man, with a head of curly black hair, a face clean shaven, and a perennial smile. He looked—but was not—guileless, and he was engaged in many speculations which demanded foresight, courage, and coolness. There were the most contradictory rumours afloat regarding him, and whilst on the one side people spoke of him as a man of prodigious wealth, others alleged that he was all but insolvent, and spoke darkly of times when he was puzzled to pay the very tradespeople who supplied his household with meat and bread and the other necessities of daily life. He lived in good style, kept a good stable, and a houseful of servants; had a generous table, subscribed to local charities with great liberality but strange fitfulness, and dispensed an ostentatious hospitality to all kinds of queer people—now entertaining within his own walls the Nonconformist divines of the county, and now in a great tent on his grounds feeding the volunteer force of Gallowbay, then just newly established. He entertained the Fire Brigade, he entertained the Amalgamated Association of Railway Porters, he gave a Foresters' Fête, and he gathered together the Oddfellows and the Buffaloes. It was rumoured that he meant one of these days to contest the county, and that he was preparing beforehand by all these works of munificence. All the people who liked to look on the dark side of things prophesied bankruptcy for him; and all the people who liked to think of riches, even in another man's possession, talked of him as a Crœsus. The plain truth of the matter is that he was nearly always involved in speculations to the very limit of his means, and that he never knew when he might not come to business wreck. He gambled with thousands and thousands of pounds, as if he were playing at chuck-farthing. When he won (and he seemed generally to win) he went double or quits. He would have a dozen ventures on hand at a time, and nobody ever saw him ruffled or anxious. He was always rosy, smiling, and happy to look at, and he was always going to make a glorious victorious haul, or be cleaned out completely.

Now it chanced that on a sudden Mr. Clarence G. Sheeney had found two of his adventures exceptionally fortunate, and was looking about for a new chance of double or quits with Fate, when, with a crash and a rattle, two others fell about his ears. Each of these involved a law-suit, and Mr. Sheeney's name being at this time questioned in many places, everybody began to pelt him, and he was much put to it to keep his head

above water. In this momentary extremity he cast his arms abroad, and clutched those who were nearest to him. One building speculator surrendered his life-buoy and sank—went down into the deep and appeared no more. The poor Earl of Windgall being clutched, protested that he had no life-buoy to lend, not even of the smallest. Then the financier whispered in his ear, and he saw not merely bankruptcy but disgrace before him, and was almost persuaded to throw up his hands and sink at once.

To escape from the metaphor, which begins to run some risk of growing confused, Mr. Sheeney really wanted his money, must have, would have his money in this crisis of his affairs, would at least have one-half of it, one thousand sterling pounds, within a week, or——

The demand, the protest, and the new demand were all made by letter, and the Earl had done his best to conceal his discomfiture from his daughters. Mr. Sheeney's ultimatum reached him in the early afternoon, as he sat in his library in wretched expectation of it, and stared gloomily at the trees which were so soon to be felled in the fair reaches of the park. They had been his father's pride and his grandfather's and his great-grandfather's. There was not a Windgall who would not turn in his case of lead in the family vault when those noble trees came to fall before the creditor's axe. The day when the first axe sounded in those pleasant glades would be the bitterest he had ever known, and his life had been embittered by poverty and its humiliations now for many and many a day.

The little grey man, who resembled many of his class in not looking like a lord, received from the hands of an overwhelming servitor the expected letter, and trifled with it until the man had left the room. Then he opened it and read it, and, laying his head against the window casement, he groaned aloud, and was discovered in the fact by the Lady Ella, his daughter.

She advanced anxiously, but there was something of a look of protection in her face and attitude, and she bent forward a little as she moved, as if eager to console. The Earl turned towards her, and she slipped an arm about his neck.

"You are in trouble, dear," she said. "What is it? Can I help you?"

"No, my dear," said the poor nobleman. "I haven't told you before, but you will have to know it. There's no help for it, Begg says, and they'll have to cut down the timber in the park. Poverty, my dear, poverty."

This was a blow, and a heavy one.

"Poor trees," said Ella. "Poor papa."

"Your landscape loves come out," said the Earl, trying to smile. "You cry out first for the trees."

"And last for you," said his daughter, with a world of tender meaning in the tone. The Earl stroked her head gently,—she was a little taller than himself and looked much stronger and braver. She kissed him once or twice, and then they stood side by side looking at the park, which lay before them in all the fulness of its summer beauty.

"That isn't the worst of it," said Windgall, after a pause. He looked gloomily out of window, and avoided his daughter's eye. "I am in the hands of the Jews."

Now that proclamation sounded very terrible, and the girl scarcely knew what to make of it. It brought an indistinct idea of merciless pursuit and helpless surrender, which alarmed her the more because its terrors were undefined.

"I owe that fellow Sheeney, at Gallowbay, two thousand pounds," the Earl continued. "He presses for it; says he must have it. I haven't it, and I can't get it, and there's an end of the matter." His daughter kissed him again, and murmured some unintelligible syllables of pity and affection; but of what use was that? "I shall have to put the house in the market," he said bitterly, "and the whole estate, and then I must pay off the mortgage; and we must go on to the Continent and drag out as well as we can in Brussels, or some other such refuge for the poor. There is no help for it." She kissed him once more, and he moved away with a little show of fretfulness, and walked up and down the room. "This wretched Hebrew fellow," he broke out querulously, "says he *will* have a thousand pounds by this day week. He might as well ask me for a million."

"The diamonds are worth more than a thousand pounds, dear," she said gently. The grey little peer stopped short in his walk and looked at her with melancholy affection.

"No, no, my darling," he said, "I have robbed you of everything already. You gave me the little yearly income your poor mother left you as soon as you could touch it, and now you want to give me her diamonds, poor thing!" There were tears in his eyes, and he felt ashamed of them, and walked away to hide them.

"You must take them, papa," she said, in tender decision. "You need not part with them altogether. You may be able

to recover them, if Mr. Samson's hopes should turn out to be true."

"They won't," said the Earl, mournfully. "They have struck upon a stone, or a shale, or a chalk, or something of that sort which always lies below coal, and is never found above it. Samson knows perfectly well by this time that there isn't coal enough under the whole estate to fill that fire-grate. Let us have no false hopes, my dear, but let us face the truth." He took credit to himself for a sort of magnanimity in saying this, as if there had been a virtue in it, but his mental attitude was not very courageous, and the under consciousness of this fact disturbed him. He would have liked to take the diamonds too, and escape this trouble for the time, but it seemed base to do it. A great deal of his earlier love of honour and native pride had fallen away from him, but he was loth to see the last of them.

"Papa," said the girl, approaching him again, and embracing him once more, "I will tell you what we will do. You shall take the diamonds and pay Mr. Sheeney, and then we will close the house and go abroad, and live very, very cheaply until we can come back again with a little money saved. This great house is very expensive, and we are really too poor to live in it. Whilst we are away it might be let—the Malmsboroughs let De Wincey Hall last year. And you might sell the house in Portman Square, papa, and——"

"The house in Portman Square," said the Earl with a groan. "The house in Portman Square is mortgaged to the chimney-cowls. You don't understand business, Ella. Women don't grasp these things. The house in Portman Square no more belongs to me than the Bank of England does."

The beautiful girl stroked his grizzled hair and looked at him with mournful affection.

"You must pay Mr. Sheeney, papa. You must take the diamonds. I know how hard it is for you to take them, dear."

"You do me no more than justice, there," said her father. "My dear, there is no one so wretched as a poor peer."

She was not unused to this sort of statement, but she felt for him with her whole heart. Perhaps of the two the girl's burthen was the heavier, for she bore her own griefs as well as his. This affair of the diamonds was nothing. It was infinitely easier for her to give them than for her father to take them, and she knew that. But the Earl's last speech amounted to a reluctant acceptance, and with a parting caress she left him, but only to return in a few minutes' time with a dark shagreen case

in her hands. Her father took the case and opened it, looked at the glittering stones within, sighed, closed the case and set it upon the table. "I have the best children in the world," he said then, "and I could almost wish that I were childless."

"Papa!" cried Ella, in a wounded voice.

"I could, indeed," said Windgall. "What can I do for you? I drag you into my troubles. I can do nothing but make you unhappy."

"No, no!" she answered. "We have one another, and we need care for nothing else."

"You are a good girl," said the little nobleman,—"a good daughter." He paced indeterminately about the room for a minute or two, and made one or two halting motions towards the shagreen case on the table, but at length he summoned courage enough to pause and lay both hands on it. "I take these," he said "with bitter unwillingness, my dear. I take them because it would be worse for you and all of us if I refused them. I take them, in short, because I can't help taking them. God bless you, my dear. You are the best daughter man ever had, I think, and I am the unluckiest father that ever lived." He took the case in his hand and mechanically opened it and closed it. "I had best get the business over, Ella, since it has to be done. I will go up to town this afternoon."

"Yes," assented Ella; "it will be better to have the immediate danger removed. And when you come back, papa, let us take counsel together, and see what can be done. I am willing to live anywhere, dear. It will be best to go abroad."

Windgall drove to the railway station and set out for London, with the jewels in a despatch-box beside him, and through the whole of the journey one troublesome thought was with him. He despised himself very heartily and honestly for permitting this thought to take such hold upon his mind, but it seemed of no use to struggle against its intrusion, and at last he submitted to it, and sat staring at it through his cigar smoke with a distempered countenance and a heart full of bile. Had it pleased heaven that Bolsover Kimberley should have been something less of a snob, his lordship could have borne this intruding fancy better. But the little cad was *such* a cad, so hopeless, helpless, and complete, that in the contemplation of his awful perfections in that way the Earl shuddered. And all the while the over-dressed figure of Bolsover Kimberley stood before the embarrassed man, and a voice seemed to issue from it, "Catch

me, flatter me, wheedle me, marry me to one of your daughters, and see the end of your woes."

A lady of the house of Windgall could marry anybody, and still be herself; but who could be happy tied to a fellow like that, if she had the barest notions of what a man should be? And yet was not anything better than that galling poverty in which the girls had lived all their lives?

"He is shy, confound him!" said the noble earl, contemplating this ignoble figure. "That's his one good point. He wouldn't want to show up much. He wouldn't be always *en évidence*, like some men one sees, who are just as little fit to be seen as he is. And I don't know, even if I ask him down, that anything will come of it. In point of fact, I don't think he'll have audacity enough to think he would stand a chance."

Windgall began to hope that nothing would come of Kimberley's stay at Shouldershott Castle if he should ask him to stay and the little man should say yes. This hope was very like that of the children who, having learnt the contrariety of fate, go about wishing for bad weather for a picnic. He caught himself thinking so, and derided his own weak shiftiness of mind.

"I shall find him out and ask him down," he said aloud, with a look of new determination, "and if he has the impudence to ask one of the girls to marry him, why—heaven help her! I sha'n't force either of them. I'm not a professional heart-breaker. He doesn't seem a bad-natured little fellow, and he has good blood in him."

So his mind wandered to and fro. Fate had dealt hardly with him in making him a peer, and condemning him to poverty, and filling his house with daughters who, though the best girls in the world, could not help being expensive. *Noblesse oblige* is a very fine proverb, but amongst other things to which nobility compels is the maintenance of a good aspect in the world's eye, though it does not always supply the means. He would have been well-to-do as a mere country gentleman, but his title and his great houses had made a pauper of him, as his father and grandfather had been before him. Whilst he thought of this Kimberley affair, he tried to solace himself, as he had done before, by satirizing the world, and he told himself that most men in his place would have no scruples such as he had, though every one would be merciless upon him if he threw his own scruples away.

He arrived in town too late for business that night, and spent an hour or two at the Carlton where everybody was interested

in politics, which, of all themes in the world, was perhaps the least interesting to this hereditary legislator. The great effects of party battle touched him, and he was a good Tory; but the continual affairs of outposts which keep the professional politician's blood warm and his heart in fighting trim were a weariness to his soul, and he left the place, feeling *triste* and bored, though almost anything had seemed a relief from the exigent thought of Mr. Bolsover Kimberley. It was pretty certain, of course, that the young man would not refuse the Earl's invitation; but it was by no means certain that he would of his own initiative fall in love with an Earl's daughter, and by no means certain, even if he did so, that he would speak out his mind.

"It is a dirty business," said Windgall, as he tossed to and fro on his bed, "and by no means a sure one. And when I have shown the whole world my hand, I may be disappointed, and have nothing but a little of the dirt through which I shall have crawled still sticking to me to remind me of my trouble."

That other affair of the diamonds was not one to be proud of, and his lordship tossing to and fro all night was perhaps as little to be envied as any man in her Majesty's dominion. He could not help himself. His poverty was no fault of his; he knew not, in fact, on whom to charge it; but he knew what a weight it was, and how inseparable it seemed from degradation of one sort or another, and once or twice in the course of the long, long night he felt half-inclined for suicide.

It was midway through the afternoon before he found courage to run with his daughter's jewels to the pawnbroker's. The pawnbroker was a jeweller also, and found the combination of trades convenient to his clients, and therefore convenient to himself. It was no wonder, when, having nerved himself to this disagreeable task, the Earl ran against the man who had so long filled his thoughts, that he was a good deal embarrassed. He had meant, as a matter of course, that his meeting with the little millionnaire should have as casual and unimportant a look as he could give it, and this unexpected encounter was valuable in its way; but he was so little fitted for it, and so taken aback, that he had made it seem a thing of urgent importance, and for a moment or two was at his wit's end to nerve himself. But on his way to Kimberley's hotel he pulled himself together, and an inspiration came to him.

"What I wanted to say," he began, when he and Kimberley were settled down, and he had accepted one of Kimberley's cigars, "was simply this: my lawyer tells me that a public

reception is a-foot in Gallowbay, and that you, Mr. Kimberley, are the object of it."

He smiled therewith his smile of election times—not altogether a natural contortion, but scarcely so forced and wretched as that with which Kimberley replied to him.

"Begg says there is great fear of your refusing. Now, will you tell me if that fear is at all grounded?"

Kimberley drew out from his breast-pocket Mr. Amelia's elaborate epistle.

"I meant to have dropped this into the post this afternoon," he said; "but I'm glad I forgot it now, my lord, because it's my answer." He knew how clumsily he expressed himself, and blushed hotly, as he tore open the envelope and handed the enclosure to his lordship. "That says better—" he began, and trailed off into silence.

Windgall took the letter and read it, by this time quite self-possessed again.

"Admirably expressed," he said, returning it to Kimberley, with a slight bow; "and most honourable to your heart, I am sure, Mr. Kimberley; most honourable. But—may I presume to advise?" Kimberley said nothing, but he looked as if nothing the Earl could do would seem like a presumption to him. "If I may," pursued Windgall, "don't send this letter. I respect your desire for retirement, Mr. Kimberley. I have the fullest and completest sympathy with that desire, and yet I say, 'Don't send this letter.' The people of Gallowbay look forward to your occasional presence amongst them with natural anxiety, and the receipt of this letter will cause them considerable disappointment. People in our position have duties thrust upon us which are not always pleasant, but are none the less to be avoided on that account." At this flattery Kimberley blushed and trembled. "I had business in town this week," pursued Windgall, airily; "and when I learned from Begg that there really was a considerable fear of your refusal I made up my mind to intrude my counsel upon you. I will ask you to forgive the intrusion. I am an older man, and perhaps more experienced in the ways of the world. Let that consideration help you to excuse me."

"I should like to do my duty," said Kimberley, humbly; "but I couldn't endure a public reception, my lord. I couldn't, rea'ly."

"You will not find the ordeal so trying as you fear," returned his lordship. "You'll excuse my candour, Mr. Kimberley, I

know. Gallowbay is not a wealthy place; I take a great deal of interest in the town myself—was born there—have lived there for the greater part of my life; and the people hope for your occasional presence. The late owner of the estate was a minor—not a penny was spent in the place for twenty years. People feel it keenly, I assure you."

"I'm going to give a norgan to the noo town hall, my lord," cried Kimberley, "and to build a wing to the grammar school. I shall be glad, my lord, to do anything in that way, but I couldn't endure a public reception, my lord. I couldn't, my lord, I rea'ly couldn't."

Inwardly my lord fairly writhed at the speech and manners of the millionnaire, but he put a good face upon the matter, and spoke with an air of unpretentious *bonhomie.*

"Well, Mr. Kimberley, don't have a public reception until you feel more equal to it. I'll tell you what you might do," he said, as if the fancy had presented itself to him for the first time that moment. "Come and stay at Shouldershott Castle for a week or two, and familiarise yourself with the new feel of things. You can meet the county people there gradually, and get used to them. You'll have to meet them some day, you know, and you may as well get it over. What do you say?"

Kimberley, as might have been supposed, was prodigiously flattered and fluttered by this proposal. The Earl pressed him a little—it was not worth while to *finesse* with a fish of so blunt a mouth—and in a while Bolsover, scarcely knowing what he did, consented. When he thought of being beneath the same roof with Lady Ella, his spiritual vertigo became almost maddening, and he flushed and trembled as he had never done before. He—little snob of a lawyer's clerk as he had been—had dared to love her when there was never any distant hope in the world that he would even speak to her, and now he was going to be near her, to shake hands with her, to sit at the same table, to sleep beneath the same roof. The light scorched the vitals of the moth already.

He laid out his finest trousers, and waistcoats, and neckties with his own hands that night, and spent an hour or two before his mirror advancing and retiring, shaking hands with imaginary gentlepeople, taking off his hat, and practising a graceful employment of his pocket-handkerchief. When he got to bed he read a book of etiquette, from which he learned, amongst other valuable things, that "it is permitted to a gentleman to wear a black

frock-coat in the bosom of his family," and that a lady may, if she choose, descend to the dinner table in yellow gloves.

He pictured the Lady Ella in yellow gloves, and he saw himself beside her in evening dress, with diamonds glittering in his shirt-front—*his*—Bolsover Kimberley's.

"I shall see her," he muttered wildly to himself; "I shall meet her in the 'alls, the 'alls of dazzling light." He was choke-full of emotion and of such poetry as he could hold. He was heroic, he was tender, he had his hopes and his despairs, he worshipped his love and bewailed his own imperfections, as loftier people do in the like conditions. There were moments in his reveries then and afterwards when she stooped to him from her imperial place, and whispered that she loved him. There were hours when she scorned him, but despair was scarcely bitterer than the maddening draught of hope. Even if there had been no Lady Ella in the case, it would have been bad enough for a shy man of such humble breeding to find himself bound on a visit to an earl. As it was, it is something of a wonder that Kimberley did not lose his mental balance altogether.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mr. Amelia's observations on the damaged memorials of Westminster Abbey were a good deal cut about by the editor of the *Piccadilly Gazette*, but they were inserted and they were paid for. He felt, not without reason, that he had made a curiously fortunate beginning, and being a young person of much natural aptitude he began to find and to work new mines of industry. He had not yet discovered who Autolycus was, but that light-handed gentleman's motto was constantly with him, "Every lane's end finds a careful man work." Rambling in one of the parks one day he overheard an aristocratic-looking old fellow haranguing a younger man on the disgraceful duck-weeded dirtiness of one of the smaller sheets of ornamental water. He dashed into the conversation with no embarrassment.

"Excuse me, sir, but can you tell me who is responsible for the condition of things you complain of?"

The ancient swell put up a gold double eyeglass and surveyed

him with an air of placid curiosity, dropped his glass, and turning to his companion resumed his speech.

"That," said Mr. Amelia to himself, "is abominably insolent," and he walked away erect and indignant. Inquiries addressed to a good-humoured official of the park secured an answer, and Mr. Amelia booked another half-guinea, the *Piccadilly Gazette* demanding to know next day why it was that one of the lungs of London should be poisoned by the exhalations of this filthy pond, and calling pretty smartly on the First Commissioner of Works to attend to the business with which he was entrusted by the country. "It is not," added the editor, "that the Commissioner of Works is one whit behind his colleagues. In small things as in great the party now in power has agreed to proclaim its incompetence." This rebuke being founded on Mr. Amelia's observations inflated him in no small degree, and he began to feel that he was a personage of consequence.

Finding this pessimist game upon which he had entered a profitable one, he pursued it, and became a Censor of the Parks and Streets. Diligently studying the journalistic manner, he arrived at a closer and closer approximation of the *Piccadilly* style, and day by day saw better what was wanted. In the course of a week or two he was bold enough to present himself at the office of the journal, where his smart, crisp manner pleased the sub-editor on duty, and in a day or two he found himself entrusted with a commission for an abbreviated report of the proceedings of the Society for the Suppression of the Opium Traffic, then gathered at Exeter Hall. So, little by little, he pushed, and shouldered, and edged until he became a recognised figure at the office, and, though unsalaried, made such an income as he had never realised before. He scraped acquaintance among his fellow-penmen and examined them all with critical eye, seeing nothing in any of them to make him afraid of his own ambitions. The brighter sort were too convivially inclined, the respectable sort too dull to alarm him.

Now and again he contrived to commit amazing blunders, as when he asked in perfect innocence and good faith in what line of life Mr. Thomas Carlyle had distinguished himself, and in the after days of his success the envious remembered these things against him and quoted them one to another. But when we remember how full of pitfalls of this kind the life of an ignorant instructor of the public is sure to be, we shall wonder, not that Mr. Amelia tripped so often, but that he fell so seldom. Deft, adaptive, courageous, quick to seize and

absorb, the little man took his place in the rough-and-tumble scramble of lower journalism in London, and made his way with wonderful rapidity. Some men are held back in the race of life by shyness; he had none. Some are weighted by humility; he had but a theoretical acquaintance with the quality. To some the fact that a place is filled already is a bar against application for it; Mr. Amelia never waited for a place to become vacant before he would ask for it, if he thought it in the least worth his having. He was unpopular, but people said he would rise. He despised the unpopularity, and determined to fulfil the prophecy.

It was about this time that he entered upon that line of life which led him to his present pitch of greatness—the satiric observation of men and manners. His note-book began to be rich in unpleasant phrases descriptive of people whom he saw casually in the performance of his duties. "A man with a bad hat and a tired sneer." That was Formby, the famous writer of *vers de société*. "A man with dejected eyebrows and apologetic hair." That was the noble lord the Home Secretary of the period. He forged and polished these little arrows at home with infinite labour, and when the man was mentioned he shot one of them with an admirable air of impromptu. Sometimes an arrow lay in the note-book quiver ready polished for months together, before he would fit it to the string and let it fly. His earlier efforts were somewhat clumsy, but practice brought perfection, and in a while there was no man in London who could fit you with a phrase more completely than Mr. Amelia, if you would only give him time. Not your spiritual or moral qualities; but the cut of your coat, the set of your hat, the fashion of your boots, the colour and style of your waistcoat or necktie; any little characteristic gesture, any outside habit, or trick of feature; he could hit any of these things with unerring precision. His "Notes from Behind the Speaker's Chair," his "Thumb-nail Sketches from the Peers' Gallery," his "Letters from the Member for Land's End," delight us at this hour by that very trick of surface observation, though, perhaps, after half-a-dozen years of hats, waistcoats, and neckties, we are getting a little weary, and would fain go deeper.

But let us go back to our muttons.

Mr. Amelia, in his earlier days in London, frequented a certain bar not far from the journalistic centre, where at that time many men of letters habitually took luncheon, or sat above their claret or whisky-and-water to chat among themselves.

Here he familiarised himself with many of the details of good table service, and observed the manner in which fish is served and green peas are eaten. Here also he learned that champagne is drunk cold, and that connoisseurs prefer to have the chill taken off their claret before they consume it. His own modest refection rarely exceeded a sandwich and a cup of coffee, and the waiter, who found the rest of the guests far more liberal than men of fortune would have been, hated Mr. Amelia, who would detain the comic papers for an hour whilst he nibbled his sandwich and sipped his cold coffee, and would pocket all his change at the end of this moderate banquet.

Hither came many of the best known men in London. Clancarty, the genial, the lovable, the too soft-hearted man, would shed a tear there of a night into his whisky whilst he talked of his father, famous in letters, whose name all Englishmen honour, and whom his children adored with a passionate devotion. MacGuffog, prince of all who have written of war—loud, animated, cheery, a dauntless man of most generous nature: the great Dexter, purblind with books, a mine of strange learning, bland and suave, but ready to be caustic: Harford, big and bearded, with Crimean shirt and ungloved hands, breathing threats and slaughter against all Whig Fellows and Radical Fellows, bombarding opposers with great rolling epithets—the most amiable and friendly of men, and the best of writers for boys: these and many more Mr. Amelia beheld as he munched and sipped behind the marble-topped table. He was not in the least oppressed by their greatness, but put himself mental shoulder to shoulder with each of them, and felt as big as any. There is something at once comic and sorrowful in the image of the little man in his corner, looking out of his keen, shallow eyes at this new world, and revolving in that ill-furnished, compact big head of his the constant comparison between himself and others. The comparison was always to his own advantage.

One day Jack O'Hanlon, with his Irish eyes twinkling behind his spectacles, sat down, with his glass of whisky, beside Mr. Amelia, and fell into talk with him. A royal duke and a chimney-sweep were one to Jack. He talked to anybody if he had the inclination, and seldom waited to be inthrojuiced. Mr. Amelia had some knowledge of him already.

"Ye're a young man from the country, I'm thinking," said Mr. O'Hanlon, twinkling at the little man beside him.

"And you a middle-aged gentleman from Ireland," responded

Mr. Amelia, crisp and cool. Jack sparkled and twinkled for a second or two, and then laughed outright.

"Faith, I am, me nettle. Though how ye found it out's a wondher. I'm generally taken for a Neapolitan. Didn't I see ye at Exeter Hall yesterday, helping to convert the haythen?"

"We sat at opposite ends of the reporters' table," said Mr. Amelia.

"I thought I knew ye again," said Jack. "Have a drink. There's a dryness in the atmosphere of London which makes it the most delightful place in the world to live in. Ye're always thirsty here, thank God. A constant thirst's a great blessing."

"I'll take a cup of coffee," said Mr. Amelia, sliding his cup towards the waiter.

"Don't waste a good drouth on a material like that," Mr. O'Hanlon expostulated. "It's casting swine before pearls." Mr. Amelia resisting all pressure towards alcoholic beverages, Jack sighed and resigned the point. "What are ye for?'

Mr. Amelia rightly construing this as asking what journal he represented, answered that he was not formally attached to any journal, but was occasionally asked to represent the *Piccadilly Gazette*.

"Unattached!" said Jack. "Then there's hard times in front, begorra! The Session's coming to an end in a month's time, and there'll be thirty or forty men loose and out of collar, and every man Jack o' them eager for work. Poor devils! A man with a sessional engagement and nothing else, is a melancholy object. He draws his six guineas a week for half the year, and nothing at all for the rest of the time."

"A man should be able to live on that," returned Mr. Amelia. To tell the truth, his heart leaped within him at the thought. "One hundred and fifty pounds per annum, and half the year a holiday! I confess I see nothing to mourn for."

"It's a simple sum in arithmetic, isn't it?" said Jack. "But the multiplication table's the biggest liar unhung. Six guineas a week for six months is *not* three guineas a week for twelve. Ye think it is, but that's because ye're young and innocent, and put your trust in the multiplication table. Ye'd think seven pounds a week was a pound a day, wouldn't ye? I used to, till I had to depend on it, but I've found out the blagyard swindle now, and I know betther."

"If seven pounds a week is not a pound a day, what is it?" demanded Mr. Amelia.

"It's seven pounds," said Mr. O'Hanlon, "ontil ye break it. Then," with a grave sweep of the hand, "it's vapour."

"I am inclined to believe," said Mr. Amelia, crisply, "that the multiplication table is right after all. I think I could undertake to demonstrate its accuracy if I had that seven pounds a week to experiment on."

"Rosy illusions of me youth," said Mr. O'Hanlon, raising his glass and looking with one eye at the pale amber fluid within it, "farewell." He finished the whisky at a draught, and catching the waiter's eye at that instant he beckoned him with a backward nod.

"Do it again, Alick," he said, with suavity; "hot, but no lemon. May be," he said, turning to Mr. Amelia, "you're a total abstainer. That makes a difference."

"If I drink at all," said the little man, "I drink in strict moderation."

"Do ye now?" asked Mr. O'Hanlon. "I'm told there's people like that. I'm a beveragist meself."

This to Mr. Amelia's mind was not a statement which called just then for outspoken comment. His companion of the moment had drollery of a sort, no doubt, but it was not of the kind that Mr. Amelia was readiest to appreciate. A jest that stung was the sort of jest he liked most, when he saw it levelled at another; he loved a cut that laid the bone bare or a thrust that set the victim quivering—something nice and nasty and vindictive. Poor Jack O'Hanlon's sunny, careless, Irish heart, with all its beams tinged by passing through a medium of whisky-and-water, seemed a worthless sort of organ to our young censor. Since he had first set eyes on Mr. O'Hanlon, in the little Fleet Street hostelry, where the good-natured Irishman's scheme for Barney had served as the foundation-stone of Mr. Amelia's London fortunes, he had seen him half-a-dozen times or so, generally twinkling and sparkling behind his glasses in the middle of a knot of good fellows, whom his quaint sayings kept in continual mirth, and Mr. Amelia had even heard Jack described as the humourist *par excellence* of the reporting world.

"I suppose," he said to himself, "the man talks this sort of flippant, whiskyfied nonsense everywhere." He sat silent for a minute or two, labouring to characterise his new acquaintance. By-and-by out came his note-book and down went the formula —"A man who pelts you with whisky-sodden pellets of stale Irish humour." This was written in Mr. Pitman's system of shorthand, under O'Hanlon's nose, but Mr. Amelia was careful

not to let his companion see it. He surveyed the signs with a one-sided appreciative droop of that big compact head, and nodded, as if to say that the phrase would do when filed down a little. One of these days, he thought, he might write a novel, and scarify the press crew of London. So poor and pitiful a set as the rank and file of the London press he thought he had nowhere seen; but this was not an honest opinion with him, because in obedience to his comparative instinct he had measured them all by himself—a standard by which they were sure to fail.

"Would ye like t' earn a guinea?" said Mr. O'Hanlon suddenly. "Don't think I'm insultin' ye, now, and mockin' ye with th' unattainable. Are ye free this evening?"

"I am disengaged this evening," responded Mr. Amelia, returning his note-book to his pocket, "and I should like to earn a guinea if I saw a way to it."

"There's a nephew o' mine," said Jack, "from Ballykillfadden —me own place—that's taught himself shorthand and imported himself to London. Barney Maguire's his name; maybe ye've met him? No? The better luck's yours. I got 'm a berth in the Gahl'ry o' the House o' Commons—where he is about as fit to be as me aunt's cow is to be field-marshal—and he's on the burst this two days with his first week's salary. I did his work meself last night, but to-night I'm busy, and since you're new and out o' collar I don't know why ye shouldn't have the guinea as well as anybody else. The work'll be light to-night, with as likely as not a count-out after dinner; but ye'll get the guinea all the same."

"When shall I be wanted?" asked Mr. Amelia.

"We've time for a quiet walk down there," said O'Hanlon. "Wait while I get a cigyar, an' then we'll stretch our legs."

As Mr. Amelia walked westward along Fleet Street and the Strand, and past Trafalgar Square and Whitehall, his mind was busy with all kinds of ambitious fancies. He was actually going into the Gallery of the House of Commons, and though it was but as *locum tenens* for a single evening, he would have set foot as a worker within those precincts, and would have realised the aspirations of the last three years. Might he not find a permanent place? and who knew what would happen if he did so? His companion's Irish drolleries fell on ears that scarcely heard them, but Mr. O'Hanlon was in a talkative humour, and did not care to be interrupted, so they went along amicably, the one having all the talk to himself, and the other

following his own fancies. In a while they came to Palace Yard, and Mr. Amelia, with head erect, chin tucked in, and his little figure pulled out to its height, trod for the first time the stones with which his feet in after years became so familiar. A police officer on duty in a corner of the yard recognised O'Hanlon with a nod, and drew aside from a doorway to allow him to pass, and the Irishman opened a door and beckoned Mr. Amelia to enter.

"They say," he said, "that this used to be the Star Chamber. I'm no antiquarian meself, but I believe they're right."

The new-comer beheld a small but lofty room with cushioned benches at the wall, an open fire-grate, a table strewn with long pipes, with a dozen pewter pint-pots and glasses amongst them; and seated on the benches, or in arm-chairs at the table and on either side the fire-grate, a dozen gentlemen of varying ages in a cloudy haze of tobacco smoke.

"Begorra," said O'Hanlon, in a half-whisper, "I'd forgotten to make meself acquainted with your name. What d'ye call yourself?"

"My name is Amelia," said the little man.

"Oh the little dorlin'!" cried Jack.

"William Amelia," said the little man, with mighty stateliness. He is a poor humourist, indeed, who can find no better fun than to make jokes on a man's name. Jack laughed in answer to the reproof Mr. Amelia's manner conveyed, and saluted a friend or two about the room.

"Mickey," he said, seating himself beside a gentleman who looked almost as important as Mr. Amelia himself, "Barney's on the burst still, I'm sorry to tell ye, and I won't be able to be here to-night. But here's me young friend Mr. Amelia will be glad to teek his pleece for an evening."

"Very good," said the important man, nodding curtly at Mr. Amelia, and then, as if by an after-thought, shaking hands with him; "but I'll tell ye what it is, Jack, me boy, it's not me own fault at all, for so long as the work's done, I don't care who does it, but Barney can save himself the trouble of comin' back again this session. The last night he was here he was that mixed he turned over three pages of his note-book at a time, and plunged right out of a speech of Disraeli's into one of Isaac Butt's, and meed Disraeli talk three-quarters of a column of sinse and rayson and peetriotism about Ireland. Crowther sent down to the printer for the copy, and I have a note from him saying that he can't afford to encourage that sort of

eccentricity. He says the *Her'ld's* not a comic paper, though I'm not so sure o' that as Crowther seems to be."

"Well," said Mr. O'Hanlon, with a sigh, "glory be to God, murphys an' buttermilk's plenty at Ballykillfadden. Barney'll dew very well there till the beginning of next session."

"So he will," asserted the other; "an' maybe 'twill learn him a lesson."

Things promised better and better for Mr. Amelia. The chapter of accidents seemed to hold leaf after leaf that read in his favour. It was just and fitting that sober integrity and competence should prosper by the fault of drunken incapacity, and nobody could reasonably ask that the little man should pity the defaulting Barney. He seemed to be climbing to fortune on Barney's back, and though he had never seen him, he had quite a distinct image of that good-for-nothing gentleman in his mind.

"Let me see," said the chief of the *Herald's* staff, making a small mental calculation; "in alphabetical order, Maguire follows Lawrence, and Poultney follows Maguire. Ye relieve Lawrence at six o'clock, Mr. Amaylia, and at half-past ye'll be relieved be Poultney."

"I'll show ye up-stairs," said the kindly O'Hanlon, "and inthrojuice ye to the noble Steele, the janitor." Mr. Amelia followed the Irishman up a winding flight of stone steps, and, passing through a room in which a dozen men sat writing, stood before a pair of folding glass doors, through which he took a peep at Her Gracious Majesty's Commons, most of whom within view appeared to be peacefully dozing, each with his hat pulled forward over his nose. Immediately before him, shutting out the greater part of the House from view, were a number of men penned in little square sunken holes, all of whom seemed to be taking life as languidly as the gentlemen below.

"Don't block up the way, if you please, gentlemen," said a grave voice at Mr. Amelia's elbow, and the little man, looking up, beheld a big man in evening dress, with a silver chain and badge upon his waistcoat. For a moment the little man was abased in spirit before the big one, discerning in him a functionary of this ancient and honourable House; but O'Hanlon was evidently on familiar terms with him, and Mr. Amelia's awe was dissipated.

"Mr. Amelia, Steele," said O'Hanlon; "he's for the *Her'ld* this evening. Ye'll mind an' do what Steele tells ye," he added to Mr. Amelia; "onless ye want to find out where the

Torture Chamber is." Mr. Steele smiled and produced a silver snuff-box, from which O'Hanlon took a pinch. The owner of the box took a pinch also, and the two bowed gravely at each other as they sniffed at the powder.

"Might I go inside?" asked Mr. Amelia. "I should like to hear what's going on."

"Ye may, then," said O'Hanlon, "but it's a fancy ye'll be cured of mighty soon. D'ye see where the grey-headed man's sitting? him with the bald spot? Very well. When the clock across there says 'six o'clock,' ye walk into that box, and when it says, 'half-past,' ye walk out again. For me own part, I'm dry, thank God, and I'm going to the refreshment-room for a drink."

Mr. Amelia nodded a farewell, and edged himself through the folding-doors. For the first time in his life he was in the House of Commons, actually there for the purpose of reporting a debate; and he thought of Charles Dickens and Lord Campbell, who had entered on that function before him. He found a vacant corner seat, and peering over the edge of the Gallery, looked down on a gentleman with an extremely large, flat bald head, who was barking and coughing out a speech at an almost unintelligible rate of speed. Twenty or thirty men, thinly scattered about the benches, slept around him. Nobody listened except a distracted reporter in a corner, who had been especially retained by the honourable gentleman below to secure his luminosities for the *Mudpool Echo*, so that at least his constituents might be enlightened. Now and then a weary-looking personage, with a face of accustomed boredom, pushed aside the folding-doors at the entrance to the Chamber, and after a hasty glance at the slumbering figures and the gabbling old gentleman on his legs, went away again.

"And this," thought Mr. William Amelia, "is the British House of Commons!" It was duller than a meeting of Guardians or Commissioners at Gallowbay. It could not hold a candle to the Town Council of his native city.

When the bald-headed gentleman had barked, coughed, and cackled in Mr. Amelia's hearing for one half-hour or thereabouts, one of the recumbent gentlemen awoke, yawned, looked at the clock, took off his hat, and arose. "I beg to move, Sir," he said, "that the House be counted." Everybody awoke, and there was a little bustle for a while. Then twenty or thirty members strolled in and took their places, and when the old gentleman had been set a-going once more they all went out

again. At six o'clock Mr. Amelia relieved his colleague according to instructions.

"Don't take a word of this fellow," said the colleague as he climbed out of the sunken box. Mr. Amelia nodded and took his place. The old gentleman talked through the whole of his half-hour of duty, and at the end of it Mr. Amelia was visited by the chief of staff, who told him to write, "Amelia follows Lawrence—Poultney follows," on a strip of paper and drop it into a specified basket in Committee Room Number Eighteen. Having fulfilled this arduous duty Mr. Amelia found himself free until nine o'clock, and spent the time in wandering about Palace Yard and Parliament Street. When he re-entered the Gallery and prepared to take his place, there were but half-a-dozen members on the benches below, and this time a long, gaunt man of preternaturally solemn aspect was haranguing the great waste Chamber, and nobody was taking the faintest notice of him except, as in the former case, a solitary reporter, who craned painfully over the edge of the Gallery to catch his merest murmur. By-and-by somebody awoke, yawned, and stretched luxuriously, looked at the clock, rose to his feet, and moved that the House be counted. There was a longish pause, and then a cocked hat was seen by Mr. Amelia to wave below a sort of carved wooden canopy, as the Speaker counted the members present, and then a solemn voice announced that the House was adjourned. Mr. Amelia received his guinea, and went home rejoicing, with instructions to present himself anew on the morrow. He exulted, and his little breast was inflated as he walked proudly home. What a leap in life he had made, to be sure! Two or three months ago fourth reporter on the staff of a mere provincial journal, working hard for thirty shillings a week, and now picking up a guinea a night for doing nothing.

But Linden saw another sight four-and-twenty hours later, when every bench was packed, when the Peers' Gallery and the Strangers' Gallery were thronged, when the place echoed with laughter and cheers and counter-cheers, and the swiftly-stammering Grecian, standing with his hands behind him like a boy reciting a lesson, launched bitter invective, and sarcasm tipped and barbed and polished by scholarship, at his old impassive enemy, and the panting Amelia, like Time in pursuit of Shakespeare, toiled after him in vain. The speech was a mosaic of quotations from Homer and the author of the last new comedy; Father Prout and the prophet Malachi, Shakespeare, Vanbrugh, Sheridan, Horace, and Juvenal. The stammering tongue plun-

dered each of these and many more, stealing here an epithet and there a phrase, and here an apt little parable. Allusions familiar or recondite sparkled in every sentence. Every now and then, amid the tumult of the House, Mr. Amelia heard a crackling laugh from a white-headed old gentleman on his right, and this laugh always spoke of intense approval of the Greek and Latin. This old gentleman was a profound classic, and had a rare literary humour. The little Amelia sweated and writhed whilst the merry old gentleman sniggered beside him, and his heart sank as he toiled. The clock struck, his relief, note-book in hand, tapped him on the shoulder, and he left the box with a headache and a heartache. He was a failure and an impostor, and he knew it.

"That's something like parliamentary eloquence, if you like," said the white-headed old gentleman in a mellow mumble. "You're new to the work, and I daresay you found that a difficult speech to take. You can look over my copy in Number Eighteen, if that will be of any use to you."

"Thank you," said Mr. Amelia, self-possessed again. "I *am* a little uncertain about the foreign languages."

"M—m," said the old fellow, with an odd sidelong look at him, "I fancy you are! We call Greek and Latin dead languages, sir, not foreign. When I was your age, sir, the Gallery was a place for scholars. Now, any ignoramus can get into it. The foreign languages!"

He shuffled on with an indignant air, and Mr. Amelia followed meekly. The old gentleman did not repeat his invitation, but the little man sat down beside him and squinted askance at his crabbed manuscript. He was the faster penman of the two, but he regulated his pace, so as to leave the leader always one folio in advance. When the task was done he breathed freely.

"Shall I be required to-morrow?" he asked his chief at midnight, when he pocketed his second guinea.

"Yes," said the chief; "you'd better come regularly now, till the end of the session;" and away went Mr. Amelia, fatigued but happy.

But next evening the chief wore a face of wrath, and encountering Mr. Amelia in the refreshment-room, he drew him into the corridor, and there laid upon a window-sill two slips of newspaper.

"This," said he, laying a finger on one, "is Mr. Blenkinsopp's report in the *Gazette*. "This," with a finger on the other, "is

yours in the *Her'ld.* They're word for word the same. When a gentleman lends his purse to you next toime, an' tells ye to take a sixpence, maybe ye'll know better than to help yourself to a fiver. There's a guinea for this evening's work, Mr. Amelia, and we'll try to do without ye in the future. Good evening."

In his after-day of success Mr. Amelia remembered and resented this contemptuous dismissal, but now there was nothing to do but to retire.

"I'd have let it pass, Mickey," said the white-headed old gentleman to Mr. Amelia's late chief, "if it hadn't been for the foreign languages. 'I *am* a little uncertain about the foreign languages,' says he, with the most confounded innocent *dégagé* air you ever saw in your life, as if he'd been a ripe scholar in his day and had grown a little rusty. I am glad to see a young man like that get a lesson."

We all recognised Mickey's portrait in Mr. Amelia's recent brilliant novel, but not all of us knew what excellent reason the little man had for hating him.

CHAPTER IX.

The great Intelligencer of Fashion made it known to the world at large that Mr. Bolsover Kimberley was on a visit to the Earl of Windgall at Shouldershott Castle, and the world at large put its own construction on the news. People knew that Windgall was poor, and that the late owner of the Gallowbay Estate had been engaged in his minority to one of his lordship's daughters. They new that the early death of that promising youngster had been a terrible blow to the noble earl his neighbour, and the world was agreed that it was impossible to mistake the meaning of Windgall's latest move. With the curious exception of the people most interested in the projected arrangement, its whole history and meaning were known to everybody. Kimberley never guessed it, and the ladies of Windgall's household most assuredly did not so much as dream of it. Kimberley's native humility, and the constant sense he had of his own poor deserts, kept his mind from any hope so wild as such a suspicion must have confessed. He knew how ill-bred he was, or at any rate, if it was impossible for him quite to realise the full know-

ledge of his want of breeding, he knew at least most definitely that he *was* ill-bred, and that the ways of the aristocrat were not his own. His book of etiquette made him nervous, for the first time in his life, about that terrible letter "h," which is such a trouble to so many English minds; and now that he was aware of that social pitfall he was for ever tumbling into it and wallowing in shame. Now that he was near her, the Lady Ella frightened him, and he thought of his own presumption in having dared to love her, with fear and trembling. The beautiful, graceful creature belonged to another world, or so it seemed —to an order of which he had not known. She was kindly, and pitied the poor fellow's nervous agonies, but there was a something in her manner which he felt as though it had been hauteur, and intended—as it never was—to mark the eternal social difference between them.

Yet with all this he fell more and more in love, until the mere sentimental fancy which had haunted the lawyer's clerk became to the millionnaire an absorbing passion.

You may be sure that the Earl of Windgall had many hours in which his own hopes looked extremely base to him. There are people in the world, as every one knows, whose geese are all swans, but there are also people whose swans are all geese. Windgall had more in common with the latter than the former tribe. Perhaps his lifelong poverty had had something to do with the formation of the pessimist opinions he held about everything that belonged to himself, but though he had as little family vanity as most men, he knew well enough the distance which separated his daughter from Bolsover Kimberley; and sometimes, when he thought of his own longing to pass his child through the fire unto Moloch, he would actually groan aloud with shame and sudden repentance. And yet what was he to do, after all? No gentleman with his pockets full of money came a-wooing. Kimberley was a snob, certainly, but was he more of a snob than many men who had actually been received into good families? Poverty—cruel spur—galled his flank whenever he would fain have turned aside from his own purpose, and there was always ready to his hand the sophistical, hypocritical hope that nothing would come of the visit, and that Kimberley would go away without insulting his host's pride. We need not think too hardly of him because he longed to have his pride insulted and had resolved to pocket the insult. Poverty is so hard a master! There are thousands of men who hold their heads high out of the reach of shame for no better

reason than that they have a balance at the bank. There are thousands more who live seedy, shifty, shameful lives for no better reason than continual poverty affords. This theme, when one looks closely into it, begins to be terrible. How much of virtue is accidental, how much of human baseness unescapable! But the Earl of Windgall scarcely supplies the text for so awful a sermon. It is certain that if he had been but moderately well-to-do for his station he would have been an admirable father. It is certain that he had no vulgar love of money, and that in most respects he was a blameless man and a good citizen.

It was worth notice that the people who were severest on his manœuvre with Kimberley had been persuaded aforetime of the justice of his action with regard to the suit of the Honourable Jack Clare. It was also worth notice that there were few of them—and those the wealthier—who would not have been pleased to see the late lawyer's clerk approaching their own daughters with matrimonial intent.

Windgall did not care to discount the chances in favour of Kimberley's falling in love with one of the young ladies by bringing too many people to Shouldershott Castle at this time, and the little fellow was there on quite homelike family terms, so that in a little while his terror began to wear away. By-and-by he would prattle in an artless, sentimental way with Alice, Ella's younger sister, and make her the confidante of many of his troubles, though never of the greatest. Alice had a touch of good-natured mockery, and would imitate Mr. Kimberley to her sister. They both enjoyed many a good laugh over him, but were not in the least disposed to dislike him. He was not of their world, but he was good-natured and obliging, and meek beyond description. It would have been difficult to dislike so harmless a creature.

"I think sometimes," said Kimberley to Alice one afternoon, when he had been domiciled at the Castle for a week, "I think sometimes that difference in station is a very cruel thing, Miss."

"Why do you think so, Mr. Kimberley?" Miss demanded, suppressing an inclination to laugh. Kimberley looked exceedingly embarrassed as he spoke. His humble whiskers drooped to a point on either side of his blushing countenance, and a loose wisp of colourless hair stood up above his forehead, and his nervous eyebrows offered their usual apology.

"Not as a general rule, I don't," said Kimberley. "But before I came into my fortune, if I make myself understood, I

was a Liberal in politics, and they used to say that all men are born free and equal, and a cobbler is as good as a king."

"And now, are you a Tory?" said the young lady, smiling.

"No," said Kimberley, awkwardly, "I don't think so. But what I was a-goin' to say—what I was going to say was—when I began to mix with the hup—the upper classes, I seemed to find there was a difference between them and the people I was bred up amongst. Not as they ain't—as they are not—as kind, but there's a difference, and they make you feel it." He blushed all over, and clasped his hands between his knees with a nervous gesture. "I speak so awkward," he said—"I mean so awkwardly. I can't say what I want to say. I was always shy," he added desperately, "even before I came into my fortune, and now I am worse than ever."

A good girl could hardly bear to make fun of so much humility when it came thus to sue *in formâ pauperis*, and the young lady answered with great good nature,

"You will conquer your shyness in a little while, Mr. Kimberley."

"I wish you'd teach me 'ow—how?" cried Kimberley.

"I think," she said, "that shyness is very often a form of vanity. Shy people seem generally to be saying to themselves, 'Oh, what *do* people think of *me?*' and that makes them uncomfortable. Now, if I were shy by nature, the first thing I should set myself to do would be to teach myself not to think about myself at all. I should say, 'Think of anybody or anything rather than yourself,' and by-and-by, when I had grown used to that, I should begin to feel quite comfortable. To feel shy makes other people unhappy."

"Oh, do you think so?" asked Kimberley. "I might have done what you recommend me to if I'd 'ad the advantage of your advice when I—before I came into my fortune. But it's all so different now. Money doesn't make 'appiness—happiness, miss."

"Now, shall I give you some lessons, Mr. Kimberley?" asked the girl. He confessed his shortcomings so openly that there could be no shade of insolence in this offer. Kimberley jumped at it.

"Oh, will you, miss? If you only would!"

"Very well," she said gaily. "Now, in the first place you must never say 'miss' to a lady. Never. And secondly, when you make a mistake in speech you must never correct it aloud. That only draws attention to it and emphasises it. And thirdly,

you must never allude to differences in rank, whether you are talking to a duke or a ploughboy. I think you would be too good-hearted to do it before an inferior. Politeness is good-heartedness polished, that is all, and it is not kind to the duke to make him see that you feel the difference between yourself and him, and that you are pained by it."

"You've named three things, miss," said Kimberley. The young lady held up a warning finger, and the little man blushed. "You've named three things, and I've done all of them this last five minutes."

It was in this wise that Ella's sister became Kimberley's instructress, superseding the work on etiquette. Kimberley showed that surprising publication to the girl one day, and she counselled its immediate destruction.

The servants at Shouldershott Castle knew very well why their noble master had invited Bolsover to be his guest, and the people of Gallowbay were as wise as his lordship's servitors. It was known in the town that his lordship's second daughter was setting a most industrious cap at the millionnaire, and Gallowbay chose to be shocked at such a sign of worldly wisdom in one so young. The people who had known Kimberley sneered and wondered openly, and he was derided and envied and slandered by all hearts and tongues. When by chance he came among them, they were all marvellously civil, and even those who had no hope of a penny of his money seemed to take pleasure in rubbing against the owner of it, but behind his back they aired their knowledge of the world to his disadvantage, and were as satirical at his expense as they could manage to be. Mr. Blandy, his old employer, was a man who prided himself on discretion, and being hopeful of some share of the crumbs from the rich man's table, was always loud in Kimberley's praises, not knowing what bird of the air might carry the news of his disinterested affection and esteem to the ears of their object. It has long been known that there is no talisman like money for bringing to light the hidden meannesses of the human heart.

Windgall's longing for his own respect would not permit him to indulge in frequent praises of his guest, but he found virtues in him which he had not expected to find.

"He's a good little cad," his lordship would say to himself, sometimes; "but, confound him, why does he shrink and tremble and kotow so? He's afraid of the very stable-boys and kitchen-wenches, and he is hardly more alarmed at *me* than at the butler."

Many and many an hour of shame the nobleman endured—shame for his own hopes, shame lest his girls should read them, and shame that the world at large knew them already. The shame was none the less biting because it seemed likely to be wasted and endured for nothing. It seemed a thousand to one that Kimberley would never summon the courage to propose, even if he had the audacity to fall in love; and if he should falsify the Earl's fears of him, was it likely that either of the girls would take him? Nothing—and he knew that very well—nothing but the strongest pressure from outside would compel either of them to link herself for life with a man so apart from her own sphere, so incapable of being friend or companion. If the girls' mother had but lived, it would have been her place to see to these matters, and the unhappy nobleman had never felt his widowhood so keenly as he felt it now.

Meantime he put a good face upon the matter, and Kimberley and he drove or walked together in Gallowbay or the county town as if they had been equals. They walked past the very offices in which Kimberley had earned his thirty shillings a week, and the head of the great hereditary house of Windgall gave no sign. It is not only when the enterprise is noble that the conduct may be that of a hero. Even a footpad must have a sort of courage.

One day Blandy saw Windgall and the late clerk at a distance, and having pulled one glove half on, and settled his hat before the mirror into what he thought looked like a hasty angle, waited and watched at his ground-floor window, so that he might run out in a hurry and meet them by accident. The two encountering a local magnate, and falling into talk with him, kept Mr. Blandy waiting for some five minutes, but at last they moved on again, and in the nick of time the lawyer made a dash at the door and emerged upon the street with great briskness and a look of preoccupation. His sudden recovery of the ordinary affairs of life, and his surprised and humbly gratified recognition of Mr. Kimberley and his companion, were in their way a work of art.

"My dear Mr. Kimberley," he cried, with a sidelong cringe at the Earl, "I am delighted to see you, sir. I am charmed to see you looking so well. I have not had a personal opportunity of offering my congratulations. Permit me now, though I am taken somewhat at a disadvantage. It was my felicity, my lord, to instruct Mr. Kimberley in the mysteries of the law." He told everybody since his late clerk's aggrandisement that

Kimberley had been articled, and would have made a great mark in the profession. "I am sure, my lord, that good fortune never smiled upon worthier shoulders."

My lord was not pleasantly impressed with Mr. Blandy's brandified visage and glib speech, but he was very gracious with him, and when Kimberley introduced his late employer by name, Windgall bowed and said, "Any friend of Mr. Kimberley's I am sure," which sounded civil, little as its words expressed. Mr. Blandy, writhing and ducking with his snub features creased into an ingratiatory smile, protested he must have an opportunity of an hour or two with his dear Mr. Kimberley.

"That is quite natural," said my lord, affably. "Should auld acquaintance be forgot?" Mr. Blandy bobbed and bowed and laughed the flatterer's laugh.

"A most appropriate quotation, my lord," said he, "if I may venture on the impertinence of saying so."

"Don't let me be in your way, Kimberley," said the Earl, with a familiar hand on the little millionnaire's shoulder. "He will be more at home with this marionnette of a fellow than he is with me," he thought, "and I shall be glad to be free of him for an hour or two." He fancied that Kimberley's hesitation of manner arose from a dread of seeming discourteous in preferring Blandy's company. "You'd like to spend an hour with Mr. Blandy?" he said aloud.

"Leave him to me for the afternoon and evening, my lord," said Mr. Blandy, with a blending of something waggish with the humility of his tone. "He shall be sent on to Shoulder-shott Castle in the evening, my lord, quite safely. Really you must eat your mutton with me this evening, Mr. Kimberley. You can't refuse an old friend so small a favour. Can he, my lord?"

"Well, then," said Windgall, still misreading Kimberley's awkward and embarrassed silence, "we won't look for you until evening, Kimberley. Good-bye until then. Good day, sir." My lord walked on, convinced that he had done a kindness to his guest, and assured, on better grounds, that he himself was pleased.

"Come in, Mr. Kimberley," cried Blandy. "You remember the old room, eh? Ha, ha! Here it stands still, you observe. The same old room still. Do you remember, Mr. Kimberley, the last deed you engrossed in this apartment? I keep it still as a memento. You left off at the *con* in *consideration*, and I determined it should never be touched again."

This sentimental proceeding on the part of Mr. Blandy was not quite in consonance with what Kimberley remembered of him, but it was explainable by the fact that the intending purchaser had gone bankrupt a day or two after Kimberley's accession to fortune, so that the deed had no longer been needed. The late clerk, recalling this fact to mind, was smitten with a sense of vicarious shame—an emotion to which he was easily liable.

"We talk of you every day," cried Mr. Blandy, respectfully familiar and genial. "Mrs. Blandy speaks of you, if I may say so, as a son. It was beneath this roof that most of the years of your early manhood were spent, Mr. Kimberley; and though you have inscribed a flight so lofty upon the scroll of society and wealth, we cannot be unmindful of the fact. No, sir, no; we nurse that privilege, believe me. Believe me, sir, we nurse it."

Mr. Blandy had not been any better or much worse a master than the ordinary run of country solicitors are, but he was a crossgrained creature, who bullied when he could, and Kimberley had always been afraid of him. He felt a little more afraid of him now than ever, and yet he feigned to be gratified by the man's transparent humbug, and did his best to smile at his pretended friendship.

"Excuse me for one second, Mr. Kimberley," said the solicitor, "just one solitary second," as though to have him out of sight for a longer space were a thing unbearable to think of. Mr. Kimberley assenting with a disturbed smile and a disjointed nod, Mr. Blandy bustled from the room and seized the office-boy in the next apartment. "Run to the 'Windgall Arms,' Robert, and tell the landlord to send down at once. Let me see. Yes." He wrote an order for half-a-dozen of champagne and a bottle each of port and burgundy. "At once. You are to wait and come back with 'em. Now, you be back in five minutes, my boy, or I'll lace your jacket for you." The boy despatched, Mr. Blandy returned to his guest. "This way, sir, if you please. Ah! you know the way, Mr. Kimberley, as well as I do. This house was your boyhood's home, so to speak, sir. My dear, Mr. Bolsover Kimberley revisits his old home."

Mrs. Blandy, fat and fifty, arose with a little scream of welcome when her husband threw open the drawing-room door with this announcement, and received the millionnaire with two plump hands outstretched.

"How do you do, ma'am?" said Kimberley, breaking silence for the first time since his encounter with his old employer.

"My *dear* Mr. Kimberley," shrilled the lady, "I knew we should not be forgotten."

"We were sure of that, Maria," said Mr. Blandy, with considerable feeling. "For one day Mr. Kimberley is content to leave the society of his loftier friends to enjoy the humble hospitality of the companions of earlier days. Permit me to take your hat, sir. Maria, if you don't mind taking the trouble, perhaps you had better take the cellar-keys yourself and bring up a bottle of champagne. The extra sec, my love. You know." A swift wink in answer to Mrs. Blandy's momentary look of bewilderment set the lady's mind at rest, and, with a hospitable smile bestowed on Kimberley, she sidled from the room with a joyous little skip at the doorway, expressive of affection and alacrity. "Excuse me for one second, Mr. Kimberley," cried the solicitor anew, "for just one solitary second." He slipped through the open door. "Robert is gone to the 'Windgall' for it," he whispered.

Mrs. Blandy was wont to be extremely angry when Mr. Blandy proposed to introduce at his own table the beverages he loved, but she smiled so graciously at this that the fancy crossed the solicitor's mind like a sigh—what a joy it would be to have a millionnaire in the house as a regular thing! When he re-entered the room Kimberley was nervously pulling at his gloves, and he put him officiously into a chair, with a hospitable hand on either shoulder.

"A woman of a rare good heart is Mrs. Blandy," he said, seating himself opposite to Kimberley, "a woman of a rare good heart, sir, though I say it who should not. It isn't in that woman's nature to forget a friend, sir. No; she couldn't forget a dog who had enjoyed the hospitality of her roof." It seemed to occur with some force to Mr. Blandy that this was scarcely the way in which he would have chosen to express himself if he had taken more time about it, for he blushed fierily, and was fain to cover his confusion by a fit of coughing. Kimberley was on thorns alike for the pretender and himself. The shy, sensitive little soul had never pretended in his life, unless indeed it had been in that helpful and tender way in which pretence becomes surely one of the best of virtues, and he knew well enough the coarse and sordid meaning which lay at the bottom of his host's welcome. Mr. Blandy had never professed to like him until now, but had treated him with a contempt which the clerk had always felt to be natural and befitting. Everybody had despised him and made little of him,

and he had grown used to it, and had come to regard it as inevitable, and even proper for him. When strangers kotowed to him, he felt the sting of unfamiliar usage, but not as he did now, for with strangers the sense of contrast was absent.

"Do you propose to stay long at the Castle, Mr. Kimberley?" asked the lawyer, when he had a little recovered from his confusion.

"Lord Windgall has been good enough," said Kimberley, shamefacedly, "to ask me to stay for the shooting in September."

"Ah!" said Mr. Blandy, rubbing his knees, as if to get the aristocratic idea well into his system. "You find him affable? A noble house, the Windgall's, Mr. Kimberley. It is an honour to entertain a guest of Lord Windgall's beneath this roof, sir, if only for a day."

Kimberley sat and suffered under Mr. Blandy's compliments until Mrs. Blandy returned bearing a bottle of champagne,—following closely on a ring at the door and a clanging sound of bottles there.

"I am afraid you thought me a dreadful time, Mr. Kimberley," cried the lady, with a giggle, "but I had mislaid the cellar-keys, and had to hunt high and low for them. I'm afraid you'll think me a dreadful housekeeper, but I assure you it's years since such a thing happened."

"So long ago, my dear," said Mr. Blandy, with ponderous playfulness, "that I fail to recall the time."

Kimberley, rising nervously from the chair into which Mr. Blandy had placed him, looked out of the window, and saw the Blandy wine-cellar on the back of the hostler of the "Windgall Arms." He was not of a penetrating or suspicious turn of mind by nature, but in spite of himself he knew how the wine came, and the little humbug seemed typical to him of the greater, and his flesh crawled as he thought of it. He was indeed so keenly shamed in his nervous and sensitive heart, that he longed for courage to run away, and being unable to summon it sat down again with a revolving wheel in his head, and submitted himself to misery.

There are thousands of satirical people alive who have been amused by such pretences; there are many who have observed this identical pretence, which has figured in comedy a hundred times or more, and have been duly tickled by its discovery. But Kimberley was so framed by nature that when he saw through a little meanness of that kind—and, happily for himself, he saw but rarely—he endured in his own person all the shames

and discomforts which he would have suffered had he been the sinner and detected. He upset and broke a champagne-glass in his agitation, and was so overwhelmed by this catastrophe that for a moment he had a wild idea of offering to pay for the damage on the spot—an inspiration which turned him hot and cold for years afterwards whenever he remembered it. Mr. Blandy would listen to no apologies for this mishap, and Mrs. Blandy treated it so lightly and cheerfully, and rattled away to other topics with so much vivacity, that between his agitation at the accident and his bewilderment in attempting to follow the lady's speech, the shy millionnaire was well-nigh out of his senses. But the weariest hours will wear away, and the dreadful afternoon crawled on for Kimberley. He was so betrowelled by his host and hostess that he had a physical longing to go away and bathe himself. Their compliments seemed to thicken and stiffen upon him like birdlime.

Mr. Blandy besought his guest to drink, and meeting with a poor response to his entreaties did his best to atone for Kimberley's shortcomings, so that by the time the dinner was served the lawyer's brandified nose was redder and his swollen eyes moister than common, whilst he grew in affection, and became more mendacious in his memories of Auld Lang Syne with every glass he emptied. He had loved Kimberley like a son—he called Mrs. Blandy to witness how often he had said so. Kimberley might, if he pleased, verify this statement further by an appeal to Dr. Smith, to the landlord and landlady at the "Windgall Arms," to the whole world of Gallowbay. He had seen hidden qualities in the young man, he had prophesied loftier things for him, he had stood up for him again and again; he had drummed and clarioned for Kimberley for many years, when, perhaps, the object of all this solicitude had little dreamed of his affection. The wretched man of money scarcely opened his lips, but his heart bled and writhed above this liar and impostor. He felt no resentment, as a stronger man would have done; no amusement, as a man of humour might; the day was a revel of shame, and the bitter potion was held persistently to his lips to be emptied over and over and over again. But the crown of sorrow had yet to be laid upon his brow.

Mrs. Blandy had retired, and the lawyer, with eyes that by this time looked hard-boiled, sat noisily sucking at an unlighted cigar, and filled and emptied his glass with dreadful rapidity.

"Kimbly, my dear boy—you lemme call you Kimbly, won' you?—I shall live to see you occupying exshremely lofry station.

Know I shall. Win'galls a very fly ole bird, Kimbly. Win'gall can see as far through a milestone 's most men. Don't mind me calling him Win'gall, do you? His lor'ship always meant have the Gallowbay 'state, Kimbly. He meant have it when young Bolsover was alive, and he means have it now. We don't live at Should'shott Castle, but we know a thing or two, my boy. Nev' you minow we know it, Kimbly—s' long 's we know it. Sha, shawlright. Must say we didn' expect see him do the trick in quite such barefaced way; but then, of course, he's as poor as Job—poorah, grea' deal poorah. Wonrer how he keeps his head 'bove warer. But he'll nail you, Kimbly, me boy, as sure's you're 'live. Young lady seems be quite willin' too, doesn't she? It's always been a sort of trarition with the Win'galls, to be poor, an' proud, an' pretty. Poor-prown-prirry —that's family morro. I'm a lill bit 'fected when I think seeing my dear Kimbly 'nited marriage noble family. That's what makes me talk like this. Can't speak quite plain when I'm affected 's I am at this moment. But the noble Earl'll nail you f' one o' the girls, Kimbly. I bleeve you're gone coon already, ole man. 'Gratulate you, all my heart. Gob less you."

Kimberley escaped this oppressive host, and walked to the hotel, where he had already ordered a carriage to convey him to Shouldershott Castle. He walked and rode in a degradation of soul. Was it possible that this lofty gentleman, this peer of the realm, could be so coarsely and openly bent on securing him and his money that the whole world should see it and know of it? Why else should he be so friendly with so poor a creature? What had Kimberley, he asked himself, bitterly, to recommend him but his money? Was he clever? Was he handsome? Was he a gentleman? Was he a fit companion for people who were nobly bred? No, no, no, to all these bitter queries. He was a poor little snob, whom nature meant to lead a life of drudgery and poverty, to be snubbed and disdained when regarded, but for the most part to be left alone. It was bitter, oh it was bitter to have been lifted from that simple contentment he had known, to be made the target of such base tongues and the centre of such shameful hopes. He cried to think of these things, as he sat in his carriage alone. But then triumphing over his miseries came the fancy—he could have his dream of love—his lunatic fancy; he had cried for the moon, and now he could have it by asking for it. Was the news true? And if true, dare he ask?

CHAPTER X.

"KIMBERLEY," said the Earl of Windgall to his guest one fine morning as they walked in the park together, "you ought to go into public life. You should stand for Gallowbay. Has it ever occurred to you to think of it?"

This had no more occurred to Kimberley than the notion that he should offer himself as a candidate for the throne of China, and the mere suggestion of it took his breath away.

"No, my lord," he answered, after a frightened pause, "I can't say I have. In fact, I haven't."

The popular opinion that his daughter Alice was the object of Kimberley's attentions had not left Windgall altogether untouched, and since it had come to seem possible that his mean hope might be realised, and that the millionnaire would at least ask for one of the girls, my lord was ready to throw the little man at the world in a spirit of desperation. Let people see at once what manner of man he was, and if they wanted to laugh at him and to sneer at the nobleman who had made so open a bid for his money, let them get the laugh and the sneer both over, and have done with them! There was, besides, some faint hope in his mind that by attrition with the world Kimberley might even yet be rubbed into something like the usual shape. Painfully labouring to think well of his guest, in order that his own meanness might seem the less revolting to him, he discovered in poor Bolsover a score of good qualities. He was truthful to a hair, in spite of his painful shyness, and considering his dreadful breeding his sense of honour was remarkably delicate. It was not Windgall's fault, that he had been told that a sense of honour was chiefly an aristocratic belonging, and it was not wholly his fault that he had believed it. Then Kimberley was generous, and most eager to help and oblige. He was amiable and tender-hearted, and slow to take offence. His money had not set him cock-a-whoop—suddenly as it came. He never bullied a servant, or presumed upon his wealth to be insolent to a gentleman. All these and many more admirable characteristics the Earl discovered in Kimberley, knowing perfectly all the while that if he himself had had a little more money he would never have taken the trouble to discover them.

Within the last few years a great change has come over the

British House of Commons, and it is no longer the first assemblage of gentlemen in Europe. It may be a very bad thing, or it may be a very good thing, but it no longer prides itself upon being an assemblage of gentlemen. It includes many who have every imaginable claim to the title, and some who have no claim and make no claim at all. So that it is no longer so proud a thing to write M.P. after one's name, as it once was. Low people, actually sprung from the people, have had the audacity at most times in the History of the House to sit there as the people's representatives; but there was a time when they were less numerous than they are now, and when to secure a seat in that august assemblage was to give oneself a certain cachet of respectability. Windgall, in his time, had been too much within the life political to attach a very superstitious reverence to the sentiment, but he knew that it existed, and that Bolsover Kimberley, M.P., would be a person of measurably more consideration than Bolsover Kimberley plain and unadorned. With the common crowd it makes a difference still—the letters have a sort of magic even now; but a short time ago they had their weight with people in a higher sphere, and a Member of Parliament was a recognisable somebody. The distinction was, of course, trivial to a nobleman's view, but it was something. Pococatapetl would make light of the difference between Snowdon and a molehill, but the difference is there all the same, and a philosophically-minded mountain might acknowledge it.

"I have not yet heard a murmur from the press," said Windgall, "but we shall have a dissolution shortly. Bosworth is old, and not too plentifully furnished with money. I have it from his own lips that he will not contest another election, and there is a Major Heard who is talked about as being certain to fight in the Liberal interest."

"Major Heard is a very good man, my lord," said Kimberley, scarcely knowing what he said. "I should vote for Major Heard."

This was awkward, and it took his lordship a silent minute to digest it. The Windgalls had always been Tory, and he could not back Kimberley if he were Liberal. This was the first political talk they had had together.

"I had thought," said his lordship, "that you were a Liberal-Conservative, Kimberley. Surely you would uphold the throne?"

"Certainly, my lord," cried Kimberley with vivacity. The potion of ambition began to work in his blood with a perplexing

current already. If he could only dare to think of being a Member of Parliament and addressing crowded audiences in the Gallowbay Town Hall! "I should certainly uphold the throne, my lord." He began to flush and tremble again. After all, even he might be somebody.

"You would support property?" said my lord. "There are wild fellows who are beginning to talk about the abolition of property. A man in your position could scarcely ally himself with that crew."

"I think, my lord," stammered Kimberley, "that all vested interests ought to be respected." He had been used to read the leaders in his weekly paper, and he had even taken part in political discussions at the Young Men's Christian Association.

"Precisely!" cried Windgall. "Precisely! The sentiment in a nutshell." Kimberley felt flattered. "All vested interests must be respected." Thus sanctioned in familiar talk by noble lips, the sentiment received additional force. When Kimberley had spoken it he had felt a glow of public spirit, and the words reflected it. But when Windgall echoed them they took an almost sacred lustre.

"But," said Kimberley, a minute later, "the poor ought to be taken care of, hadn't they, my lord? That's what I think the 'Ouse of Commons ought to do—look after the poor."

"That is undoubtedly one of the functions of good government," my lord allowed. "But the Legislature of this country—and this is its proudest boast—exists alike for the benefit of the poor and the rich, the humble and the lofty. It works for the general good, without distinction of class differences."

Kimberley came to wonder later on what really was the proudest boast of the Legislature of this country—it had so many, and its admirers were so certain that each of them was the proudest. He was in a mighty flutter still at Windgall's suggestion, and in his mind's eye he saw a crowded hall with himself upon the platform, and on his mental ear fell the sound of cheering, whilst the figure on the platform dug one hand into his ribs and rested the other on the table in that graceful attitude he had always admired in Major Heard. But the fancy made his head swim, and he thought that he could never, never dare to be so conspicuous.

"Gallowbay would be a certain seat for you," pursued the Earl, after a little pause. "Half the voters are your tenants, and if you chose to avail yourself of my name——" Kimberley blushed and bowed. It would be useless to try to hide the

fellow away, his lordship was thinking. Better stick him up on a pedestal at once, and let everybody see him, and so get the wonder over. "Our politics, of course, must not vary too widely," he said, with a genial laugh; "but that is a matter which is easy of accommodation. When you come into political life you will find that in the main all parties have one object, and that is to keep office when they have it, or to regain it when they have lost it. The fight is to secure the confidence of the people, and that fact makes it certain that an appreciable amount of work will be done somehow. To my mind the Constitution is very like the land, and the Parties are very like the sea. They rave and rage about it, they wash away a bit here and a bit there, but they build up somewhere else. But I am not much in earnest as a practical politician, and I must not try to make you a Sadducee like myself."

Kimberley failed to understand something of this, yet it was pleasant to be talked to in such wise by one who had an hereditary place in the Legislature.

"So far as I make out your politics, Kimberley," said the Earl, stopping to confront him, and telling off the points by tapping the gold knob of his walking-cane with a pair of folding-glasses, "they indicate this. You are, first and foremost, loyal to the throne. You don't want to abolish the House of Lords, or to compel the Prince of Wales to dig for his living, or any nonsense of that sort?"

"Oh dear no, my lord," protested Kimberley, almost as scandalized as if the query had been an accusation.

"Of course not," said my lord. "Of course not. But you are a friend to the labouring classes. You think that their condition needs some amelioration—that they should have increased educational facilities, be better fed, better housed, perhaps better paid than they are in some cases. These are, in the rough, your main opinions? Then I should say that you are emphatically a Liberal-Conservative, and that your place is with the traditional supporters of law and order and the traditional friends of the people."

Kimberley murmured that he was certainly friendly disposed to law and order, and the people, but hinted that he thought himself much more Liberal than Conservative.

"In point of fact," said Windgall, "you are resolved to maintain your political independence."

Kimberley was vaguely pleased at this, and felt somehow an inch or two taller by reason of it.

"You decline to submit to the dictates of mere party spirit. You are an ardent supporter of the throne, and a champion of the rights of the people. To questions of party you decline to tie yourself. Exactly—exactly. You take the wise man's attitude; liberal in the admission of wise and necessary changes, but conservative of the great traditions of our Empire and our race."

Kimberley liked the picture of himself, and for a second he held his head up and threw out his wide expanse of scarf. Then the dread of it all got hold of him again. What an awful ordeal the hustings would be, to be sure! Oh, he dared not face it—he dared not even think of facing it! And yet the prospect was full of temptation. There is scarcely any human creature so small, so timid, as to be quite out of the way of ambition. Tender little girls in the nursery read of the deeds of great warriors, and would fain assume a masculine disguise and go out to fight and conquer. The feeblest folk have beaten their big enemies in that shadow world in which whosoever enters grows strong and stalwart and as good as his neighbour, if not a great deal better. It is not often that the very feeble and fearful have the chance of being ambitious thrust upon them as Kimberley had. If he began to make political speeches to himself, beginning and very often ending with "My lord and gentlemen," was it very greatly to be wondered at? Half the voters of Gallowbay were his tenants. Lord Windgall was willing to lend him the influence of his name. The expense would be a mere fleabite. If he could screw his courage to the sticking-point, he would dare anything, for—might not a Member of Parliament be somewhat nearer Ella?

Everything was very much in the air to my lord at present, as a matter of course. Kimberley might not propose, and even if he did the girl might flatly decline him, and in that case what could a father do? Clearly, nothing at all. He was not an ogre, living in an enchanted castle, and prepared to hand over his daughter to the demon of the glen. An English gentleman of modern days is restricted in the bestowal of his children. Windgall, who loved his girls and asked nothing better than that they should be off his hands and be happy, could only let affairs take their course—could at most offer a little mild reason in behalf of the excellent claims presented by a million and a quarter sterling.

As for Kimberley, he moved in a new world, and was, as most people would be under like conditions, excessively uncomfortable. Mr. Blandy's drunken utterances repeated themselves in

his mind, and even whilst they revolted him they brought him hope. It was hard to think it possible that the nobly born should be mercenary; it was harder still to be sure that nothing but his money would have secured him their most momentary regard; and it was foolishly, dangerously sweet to think that these humiliations brought him within reach of love. He had never fairly realised the value of his money, and when his day-dreams were of making Ella happy with it, he would impoverish himself at a swoop by the purchase of some great gem, and having earned the right to kneel before her and kiss her hands he would go back to his clerkship. It seemed too absurd to think of her as purchasable by money. If his hourly income had equalled his whole fortune he would still have been poor when he thought of her, for that she should drink from hallowed stones of unheard-of value, and eat from dishes of prodigious pearl, seemed a sort of essential, and he would have hired the world to wait upon her.

To tell the truth, the unoffending little man's lot was a sad one. To be burdened with sudden wealth, to love out of his own sphere, to be fired with ambition—he was a weakling—he was fit for no one of these things.

That evening, in the pleasant summer dusk, Windgall, Ella, Alice, and Kimberley were on the lawn behind the Castle—the Earl pacing up and down with Ella by his side, and Kimberley walking by my lord's second daughter. The two pairs were at some little distance from each other, so that a conversation in a low tone might be carried on by either without being heard by the other; and yet they were near enough to address each other without effort if they chose. Kimberley scarcely ever spoke to Ella, and the girl, if she thought about him at all, may have been apt to fancy that he disliked her.

"You are very mournful this evening, Mr. Kimberley," said the young lady. Mr. Kimberley had twice or thrice sighed involuntarily.

"I do feel a little mournful, re'ly," he responded. He had hardly ever been so much at ease with anybody in his life as this young lady made him. She rallied him a good deal to be sure, but she did it in such a way that it saved him from embarrassment. He confessed his shortcomings to her, as we have seen already, and her advice and instructions had almost entirely superseded the book on etiquette. Since he had first come to Shouldershott Castle she had been his most frequent companion, and she had an odd sort of liking for him. He was

different from the people she generally met, but she had not seen enough of vulgar people to know a great deal about them, and Kimberley's faults of speech and bearing were idiosyncrasies to her mind, and not characteristic of an inferior class. Do you suppose that an earl's daughter is certain to recognise the social gulf which exists between a solicitor and a copying-clerk?

"Of what is your melancholy compounded, Mr. Kimberley?" she asked. "The scholar's melancholy is emulation, the musician's is fantastical, the courtier's is proud, the soldier's is ambitious, and, let me see, the lady's is nice—but that can scarcely be yours—and the lawyer's is politic, and the lover's is everything that the others are. I am talking Shakespeare, Mr. Kimberley." This was half an apology, for she was suddenly afraid that she was out of his depth.

"Oh yes," said Kimberley, "I read Shakespeare a good deal."

"Do you?" cried the lady, a little surprised.

"I don't suppose I understand him like—like you do," said the little man, bashfully. "But I know 'To be or not to be' by 'art, and 'Friends, Romans, Countrymen,' in *Julius Cæsar*. Oh, I think him and Lord Byron are beautiful. 'She walks in beauty like the night,' ain't that a lovely poem, Lady Alice?"

"I suppose that a man would think so," said the girl with some naïveté; "but ladies do not care much for descriptions of other ladies. When the poets describe a man, like young Hotspur—'Methinks it were an easy leap to pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon'—that is when they please a lady, Mr. Kimberley."

She indicated the pale-faced moon by a little wave of her fan—the bright satellite was just peering above the trees—and Kimberley sighed again, as he looked at it. The thought touched him suddenly—how very, very different all his life was from what it had used to be. There was for the moment an ineffable sweetness and gratitude in his heart. To be so beautifully clad, to walk on this soft lawn beneath this pleasant sky, and to interchange thoughts on such themes as these with such a companion, and to know that he enjoyed no ephemeral holiday! It was better than the dry drudgery at the desk. For a while it consoled him for all the troubles his money had brought him.

Meantime Ella and her father strolled apart without saying

much to each other, but at this point Windgall made a slight *détour* and widened the distance between the pairs. When he spoke it was with a perfect affectation of commonplace.

"Alice and Mr. Kimberley appear to be very good friends?"

"Very good friends," assented Ella.

"I like the little fellow immensely," said my lord. "He is full of good qualities. It is a secret as yet, but I think he will stand for Gallowbay at the next election, and I shall be glad to see him win."

"He will not make a very brilliant Member of Parliament, papa," said Ella, with half a laugh.

"The House of Commons is not in want of brilliant people just at present," her father answered. "To my way of thinking, it is somewhat dark with excess of light already, and most of the brilliant personages carry their heads in their lanterns, so that a man who does not boast a lantern of his own is likely to see as well as the best of them. He is a considerable landowner, and, being a quiet fellow, would at least fill one seat which might otherwise be occupied by some blatant cobbler who wants to abolish everything but leather and the lapstone."

"I should think," said Ella, "that from the cobbler's point of view that might be natural."

"Indubitably," cried my lord, with a chuckle. "The fox would abolish the hounds and conserve the hencoop, and the rooster would no doubt be contented to see fox and hounds abolished together, but would protect agricultural interests in order to secure a plentiful growth of barley. Well, will you wear the colours of the Castle candidate, my dear?"

"With pleasure," said Ella. "It is fortunate that blue is not our colour. I am afraid that even political principle could scarcely persuade me to wear blue, but it is pleasant to wear one's favourite colour and be loyal at the same time."

"I suppose," said Windgall, laughing quite gaily at the fancy, but speaking in a softened tone, "that our little friend will be marrying by-and-by. You and Alice are not likely to pull caps over him?" Ella looked up with an amused smile, but said nothing. Somehow the smile chilled his lordship, and froze the current of his gaiety for a minute. "You laughed just now," he said, when they had taken a silent turn along the sward; "but let me tell you, my dear, that there are scores of very charming young women who envy you and Alice the chance of being locked up in this lonely old house with a millionnaire."

It was spoken with an excellent tone of badinage, but Ella found something in the speech she scarcely liked.

"It might lessen the pains of those charming people," she answered, "to know how lightly we esteem the privilege."

"Well, well," said the Earl, "he won't want to run away with the pair of you!" He thought she had partly read his mind, and he knew that he had not committed himself. "If anything happens," he murmured inwardly, "she will have grown used to think of it, and will be less likely to frighten Alice from the scheme."

Kimberley and the younger of the two girls were still walking up and down together, and were deep in the shadow of the trees. A nightingale was singing not far away, and Kimberley paused in step and speech to listen.

"Oh!" he said, "it's beautiful. I do declare, it feels almost wicked to be here and be so 'appy, when there's so many that are poor and un'appy. Don't you feel like that?" He was nine-tenths ashamed of all he said and thought.

"Could we make them happier by refusing to listen to the bird's song?" she asked.

"No," he said, "I don't mean that. It's me having so much money, and some 'aving none at all. There's people without bread this very minute while we talk."

The nightingale began to sing again, and they paused again to listen. The moonlight gleamed like frost among the branches and the leaves, and the paternal carpet of black and gold swayed at their feet. Kimberley looked out into the full glow of the moonlight, and there stood Ella by her father's side, gazing skyward and listening. The little man's heart ached with sweet anguish and helpless worship and desire. To be worthy of her for one second and then to die—to do some great deed of heroism and vanish, shrivelled in the heat of it—or to die then and there while the moon shone and the bird sang—he could not have said which would be the sweeter. How wonderfully impartial in the greater things great Nature is, to be sure! She has nothing to do with the anise and cummin—rank and wealth are not in her province—but in the weightier matters not many are forgotten.

Nobody can be relied upon always to act up to his character Courage fails, the coward fights like a lion, the forehead of brass is lowered in shame, and the shy man, with whom it is an effort to say "Good morning," will reveal the innermost

thoughts of his soul. Kimberley heaved a great sigh, and his companion turned with girlish drollery:

"Do you know how contradictory you are this evening, Mr. Kimberley? A quarter of an hour since you sighed and confessed yourself a little mournful; two or three minutes back you felt it wicked to feel so happy; and now you are sighing again."

"Oh, Lady Alice," broke out Kimberley, "you've been so kind to me; you 'aven't laughed at me, or stood off, or been 'aughty with me, and if I don't tell somebody I shall—— Oh, Lady Alice, you won't laugh at me? You won't tell anybody? You won't mind me telling you?"

"You shall tell me whatever you please, Mr. Kimberley," said the girl kindly, "and I am sure I shall not want to laugh at you. And of course," with a tempered severity, "I shall respect whatever confidence you may offer me."

"Oh, Lady Alice," he began again, "when I was poor I was a clerk in Mr. Blandy's office, and I used only to get five-and-thirty shillings a week, and of course it was 'opeless to think of marrying on that, because I never could bear to think of bringing up a family of children on nothing, so to speak, and letting them be reared like I was. So I kep' single, though I did think about one or two young ladies. But before ever I dreamed of 'aving my present fortune I saw a lady in a very lofty rank of life, and I fell in love with her. I'd never spoken to her, but I'd heard her speak, and I'd looked at her a hundred times, though of course she never took any notice of me. She never dreamed I had the face to fall in love with her. She didn't know there was such a person." He groaned there, and rubbed his wet fingers together.

"And have you seen her since you became possessed of your fortune?" asked the young lady. Kimberley was not a very romantic personage to look at, and yet he had a romance after all, and he was so obviously in earnest that it would have been cruel to be less sympathetic.

"Offen an' offen," said Kimberley. "But I ain't a gentleman, Lady Alice, not if I could paper my walls with thousand-pound Bank of England notes. It isn't money that makes a gentleman. It's bringing up and education; and she is a lady, and she'd never look at me. And while I was poor it didn't matter so much, because it was like being in love in a dream, wasn't it? And now it's worse, because I've met her, and she talks kind to me; and yet she's further off than ever, for she is

in a very lofty rank of life, and compared by the side of that money isn't anything, is it, Lady Alice? I never spoke to a soul before, and you're the first lady ever was free and pleasant with me, and I wanted to tell somebody, because I 'ave been so un'appy."

There Kimberley ended, blowing his nose and mopping his eyes with unconcealed emotion.

"Do you know what I should do if I were in your place, Mr. Kimberley?" asked his companion.

"No," said Kimberley, meekly.

"I should march," said the young lady, drawing up her pretty figure to its height, "straight to that lady's house, and I should speak my mind, and ask her for a plain 'yes' or 'no.' That is what I should do, Mr. Kimberley, and that is what you will do, if you have half the courage I credit you with."

"Alice, my dear," said my lord, from the other side of the spacious lawn, "the dew is falling rather heavily. We had best go indoors."

"Remember the proverb, Mr. Kimberley," said Alice, touching him lightly on the sleeve with her fan, as they crossed the grass in answer to this summons. "'Faint heart never won fair lady.'"

"My lord," said Kimberley, "shall we stay out a minute? I should like to speak to you."

"Certainly," answered Windgall, "certainly. Run indoors, girls." Ella and Alice twined an arm about each other, and went out of moonlight into lamplight. "What is it, Kimberley?"

The millionnaire had meant then and there to speak, but a great chasm of terror seemed to open in his soul and all his courage to fall into it. For a little while he walked beside the nobleman deaf and empty and blind, and his tongue was like dried wood. When at last he found the wit to speak he had to seize the first thing that came.

"You think I should re'ly have a chance, my lord, if I was to put up for the 'Ouse of Commons?"

"More than a chance," said my lord; "something very like a certainty."

"Then," said Kimberley, with something like the feeling a suicide has when he pulls the fatal trigger, "I'll do it."

CHAPTER XI.

At the westward corner of the Strand end of Catherine Street there used, not many years ago, to be a place of public resort much frequented by journalists and actors. It had a horseshoe-shaped marble-topped counter, about which men with ponderous voices and mournful faces would gather of an afternoon to drink and lounge and exchange the news of the hour. Day after day you might have found the same people there, all clean shaven, all sombre (except for the transient gleam of mirth which would rise and die at the latest of that vast inedited edition of *contes drolatiques*, to the creation and dissemination of which actors devote so large a share of their leisure moments), all faultlessly respectable in aspect, and all ponderously amicable one with another. At times a seedy man would enter, and would glance around with uncertain eye, as if in search of a familiar face. Sometimes the seedy man would be heavy-browed and large of frame, and sometimes he would be small of figure and would have a quaintly twisted face; but his features had always a curiously elastic look and a peculiar pallor, and always one of the trim and respectable figures at the horseshoe counter would hail him as "dear boy," and would pay for drinks for him. Sometimes on the seedy man's entrance, one of the sad-faced clean-shaven men would move from man to man the whole length of the marble horseshoe, with a deep murmur inaudible to the rest in each man's ear, and would then pass through the swinging doors and gaze calmly on the Strand. Then, in a while, somebody would come out and speak to him, and from one hand to another would pass a couple of half-crowns, and the lounger would slip them into his pocket and go on staring placidly at the Strand. Then another and another would come out and go through the same benevolent proceeding, and when the tale was fully counted the lounger would re-enter and fall into casual converse with the seedy man, finally leading him away in a perfectly accidental manner to empty the little gathered pile of silver upon him in a corner remote from traffic. It was not always that this would happen; but it was pleasant to observe that the seedy man never went empty away. The recognition of the bonds of brotherhood might be confined to the limits of four of Irish cold, or expanded to a general

subscription; but the seedy man need only catch an eye he knew to be sure of some sort of welcome. This was not the least pleasant of the manners of that vanished resort. It was no more likely than the resort itself to be immortal.

The afternoon was hot, and the Strand was like a furnace, but one man in the crowd which panted and perspired along its flags was buttoned to the chin. He was tall and broad of person, and he walked with an air of consequence, which set off his close-buttoned shabbiness to great disadvantage. His silk hat, well watered, and brushed until it had taken an oily gleam, was creased at the side and flaccid at the brim; his frock-coat was threadbare and greasy, and he wore an extremely ancient and rusty pair of gloves—an indiscretion which emphasised his general seediness until all who ran might read. He had very mobile eyebrows, ink-black and heavy, and whilst every other feature of his face was at rest, these, in obedience to the workings of his mind, wandered up and down his forehead. His chin, upper lip, and throat were all of a bluish purple; his nose, which was well formed but fleshy, was of a decided pink; and the rest of his face wore an unhealthy and uniform pallor. At the westward corner of Catherine Street he paused, slapped his pockets with a mournful air, and looked about him. Then he laid an irresolute hand upon the door, and his pale face blushed until his cheeks equalled the glow of his nose.

"Five at home," he murmured, "and another coming, and the ghost hasn't walked for ten weeks. I am sworn brother to grim necessity." He pushed open the door and entering looked about him. A friendly hand clapped him on the shoulder.

"Joe, me boy," said Mr. O'Hanlon, "I've been lookin' for ye. What'll ye take? The wine o' the country? Cold or neat? Two glasses of Irish and a smile, me darlin'. I've news for ye, Joe, that I think'll turn out well. Good health, me boy."

"What is it?" asked the shabby man, standing with the tumbler in his hand and holding it half way to his lips as he waited for an answer.

"I dropped in at Cogers' Hall last night," said O'Hanlon, "just for the joke o' the thing, to hear O'Byrne open a discussion on the feasibility of Home Rule, as a bit of practical politics, and I sat me down be the side of a toyny little creachur that was dressed and jewelled to death's door. Don't hold your whisky in that aggravatin' way." The shabby man emptied his glass and set it down. "That's betther. Well, I got into talk with the little thing—he was shyer than a gyurl—an' he blushed

when I spoke to 'm; an' what d'ye think he turned out to be? Nothing less than a millionnaire. I wrote a leader about him when he came in for his money, and directly he gave me his kyard I knew 'm. Bolsover Kimberley's his name. And now what the divil has this got to do with you? Well, I'll tell ye. He's going in for Parliament, and he wants a master in elocution, and I promised to recommend him to me friend Mr. Lochleven Cameron. So there y'are, Joe; an' all ye have to do is to walk up to the Langham, where he's staying now, and ye'll have the job."

Mr. Lochleven Cameron threw his hands abroad and took a downward look at his own figure.

"Bedad, ye're right," said O'Hanlon, ruefully, "but is them the only togs ye have?"

"Little bits of pasteboard," replied Mr. Lochleven Cameron. "Thirty-seven. Nothing else."

"Ah!" said the other, "ye can't walk about in a suit of pawn-tickets. Wait a minute. There's Basset, and Holt, and a crowd o' fellows here. Monday's always a poverty-stricken day with me, because I don't draw me screw till Saturday."

Pausing only to set another glass of whisky before his friend, Mr. O'Hanlon crossed the bar and buttonholed the great tragedian.

"Come here, Mont, me boy. Ye're not only rollin' in wealth, but ye have the best heart of any one man in fifty, and I want help for a poor divil that's a friend of mine. It's Cameron, yonder. He's out of a berth this three months, and I've found a fine thing for him—private lessons in elocution to a vulgar little ignoramus that's just come in for two millions of money, and's going to stand for Porliament. Joe hasn't the togs to go to the Langham in. Just make a walk round, Basset, do."

"Not I, dear boy," said Mr. Basset, in his magnificent deep voice. "But if the humble fiver is of service——"

"God bless ye, Mont," cried the kind-hearted Celt, his eyes flashing with sudden moisture behind his twinkling glasses. "It's a loan, mind. Cameron 'll pay back in a week or two."

"As he will," says Mr. Basset, seeming to relish the rich tones of his own voice more than common. "As he will, or as the destinies decree." He threw out his chest, as he produced a well-lined pocket-book and selected a note from the crisp little roll it held. "There you are, dear boy." Mr. Basset did not hide his light under a bushel, but allowed it to shine before men. His right hand knew of his left hand's benefactions.

"God bless ye, me boy," cried O'Hanlon again. The great tragedian shook hands in disclaiming thanks.

"A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind," he said. "I have seen hard times myself, dear boy, and I have not forgotten them." In Fancy's ear he heard the story told, and the listeners said, "A good sort, Basset. Greatness has not spoiled him." He had his money's worth already.

Two hours later or thereabouts, the hall porter at the Langham beheld a massive man in glossy black and white, who shone all over, with hat, coat, gloves, boots, linen, all glossy new. The massive man had a pink nose, a blue chin, and inky eyebrows, and he spoke in a husky mellow murmur when he presented his card and asked for Mr. Bolsover Kimberley. Mr. Lochleven Cameron's garments betrayed no trace of their late confinement, having been passed beneath the tailor's smoothing iron since their release; and it was difficult to believe that Mr. Lochleven Cameron had ever known the pinch of poverty, he bore himself so majestically. He walked to and fro in the hall, making an occasional pass at an imaginary opponent with his walking-cane, and hummed a snatch of song whilst he waited for the result of the porter's inquiries. Had any observer been present, he must have known at a glance that Mr. Cameron was accustomed to lodge at the hotels favoured by the wealthy classes, and that millionnaires amongst his everyday acquaintance were as plentiful as blackberries. When the porter returned and put him under the guidance of the waiter, who looked like a clergyman of the Established Church disguised, he still hummed his gay air and swung his cane, as he followed, unembarrassed; and when the waiter threw open the door of a gorgeously-furnished room, and the little millionnaire advanced to meet him, he flourished off his hat with amazing condescension and politeness.

"Mr. Cameron?" said Bolsover, blushing all over.

"Mr. Lochleven Cameron, at your service, sir," replied the massive man with a new flourish. He laid his hat upon a table as only an actor can, and, accepting the fire-grate as the foot-lights, crossed right, and holding his stick across his chest with both hands, faced Kimberley anew. "My friend, Mr. O'Hanlon," he pursued, "was good enough to tell me that he had mentioned my name to you last evening."

"Yes," said Bolsover; "I want lessons in public speaking." Mr. Lochleven Cameron bowed, and describing an airy circle with his cane, stuck one end of it upon the floor and sat upon the other. "The Earl of Windgall," continued Kimberley,

"has persuaded me to stand for Parleyment for my native town of Gallowbay; but I've 'ad very little practice in public speaking —scarcely any, Mr. Cameron—and I must take some lessons."

"Precisely," said Mr. Lochleven Cameron, taking the stage by a step or two to the left. "The art of natural, easy, and unembarrassed speech in public can scarcely be too highly valued in a public man. There is nothing more essential.

"That's where it is," returned Kimberley. "You know, Mr. Lochleven—I beg your pardon—Mr. Cameron—I came into my money late in life—quite recent, so to speak—and I 'aven't 'ad many advantages."

"I understand you, sir," said the elocutionist, magnificently. "You desire now to atone for the defects of early education." There was a suspicion of Dublin in Mr. Lochleven Cameron's majestic tones. "My system is, I believe, infallible. In the course of a long experience I have never known it to fail. My terms, however, are somewhat heavy. The multitude of my engagements makes that necessary."

"Oh yes, of course," said Kimberley; "I should like to get as many lessons as you can find time to give me."

"Yes," said Mr. Lochleven Cameron, thoughtfully. "Let me see." He ran his eyebrows up into his hair, and then dropped them suddenly. "The progress made depends as much upon the aptitude of the pupil as the ability of the professor. Would you prefer, sir, to take a daily lesson?"

"I think so," said Kimberley. "A lesson a day? Oh yes, certainly."

"My terms for a daily lesson of one hour's duration," said Mr. Lochleven Cameron, "would be one guinea only. I can afford some reduction from my ordinary terms when the course is pursued with regularity and celerity."

"Yes," said Kimberley. He thought it a little dear, but the thing was obviously essential. "Can you begin now?"

"It will be an economy of time to me," said the tutor, "to give a lesson this visit." He threw his cane across his chest again and grasped an end tightly in each hand. "Would you like to include platform deportment also, sir?" he asked. "Platform deportment is an extra."

Yes, Kimberley would like to study platform deportment also, and agreed to pay an extra half-guinea per lesson for tuition in that necessary art.

"We will begin at the beginning, if you please," said Mr. Lochleven Cameron. It had never occurred to him to study

the question of platform deportment until now, but he entered with great spirit and fluency upon a practical exposition of its principles. "Much depends upon first impressions. There is more, believe me, sir, than is generally supposed in the value which may be attached to the manner in which a candidate first approaches his constituents in public. There is a style of entering upon a platform which may give offence. There is, on the other hand, a style which may at once enlist the public sympathy. Permit me." He arranged a chair at the table. "Imagine this, if you please, to be a crowded hall, and yourself about to address the audience. You are at present at the head of the stairs and concealed from the eyes of the assembly. Pray, sir, approach the table and take your seat."

It is not an overwhelmingly difficult thing, on the face of it, to approach a table and to take a seat with but a single onlooker, but Kimberley felt that he had never embarked upon so desperate an enterprise in the whole course of his life. His legs were in the way, his arms were in the way. He hung his head, and sidled to the chair, and, when he reached it, slipped into it with the manner of one who has a rent in his garments and would fain conceal it.

"No, no, sir," said the tutor, in a voice of reproof. "No, no, sir. Permit *me*." He placed a chair on the side of the table facing Kimberley, and with his hat in one hand and his cane in the other, he retired to the far end of the room. There he stuck his cane under his left arm and took his hat by the brim, holding it crown upwards between thumb and finger, and having arranged his hair with a few light and graceful touches, set his right hand in the breast of his glossy broadcloth coat, and advanced with smiling majesty to the table. There, delicately bestowing his hat and cane before him, he bowed right, left, and centre, and sank into his seat, drawing it gradually towards him with his left hand, and finally suffering the left hand to fall negligently over the chair-back. "That is the sort of thing, sir. Try that, if you please."

Kimberley arose to try it, and Mr. Lochleven Cameron laid hands upon him like a drill sergeant with a new recruit, and pulled, pushed, and coaxed him into something like the preliminary attitude he desired. Poor Kimberley, with his chin stuck into what he felt to be an attitude of absurd self-importance, his stick under his arm, his hat, crown upwards, between finger and thumb, and his right hand thrust into the bosom of his waistcoat, felt like a statue of misery.

"Now, sir, advance," cried the tutor; and Kimberley set forward automatically and marched to the table, half ready to die with shame. "Better, much better," said the actor, as he watched him with a critical eye. "Much better; but remember the facial expression, my dear sir, remember the facial expression. A leetle more cheerful, if you can. But all that is very much a matter of use and custom. You must get your stage legs, to begin with. We will try again, if you please."

Kimberley had set himself in attitude anew, and Mr. Lochleven Cameron was patting and modelling him; retiring at moments to survey him with his head on one side, and then advancing to push him into some new attitude which felt more awkward than the last, when a knock sounded at the door, and the clerical-looking waiter entered with a card upon a salver.

"Show the gentleman up, please," said Kimberley in a tone of resignation, after glancing at it. "This is a gentleman," he said, when the waiter had retired, "who has done some litery work for me already. Mr. Amelia. He's going to 'elp me to get up my speeches."

"I have not yet the pleasure of Mr. Amelia's acquaintance," said the tragedian, in his deep vibratory voice; "but I shall be pleased to meet him."

Mr. Amelia entered and shook hands with Kimberley, and he and Mr. Lochleven Cameron bowed at each other; the one with a quick bob, and the other with an elaborated and stagey slowness.

"Who's got hold of him now?" said Mr. Amelia to himself, regarding the stranger keenly. "Looks like an actor."

Kimberley was like the Bishop in the Robin Hood ballad—

> A Bishop he was a baron of beef
> To cut and come again—

but all the same, Mr. Amelia was natively disposed to look with jealous eye upon any man who stuck his fork into the joint and took his slice from it.

Kimberley pulled at his limp whisker and sleeked his meek upstanding hair whilst he explained Mr. Cameron's function to Mr. Amelia and Mr. Amelia's to Mr. Cameron.

"Mr. Amelia," he said, "is so good as to 'elp me to prepare my speeches, Mr. Cameron; and Mr. Cameron is givin' me lessons in public speaking, Mr. Amelia."

Mr. Amelia drew a roll of manuscript from his breast-pocket, and laid it upon the table.

"This is the result of our conversation of yesterday," he said,

in his own crisp way. "I don't think I have missed any of the points you mentioned."

"Would you mind reading it out, if you please?" asked Kimberley. "Because then Mr. Cameron and me could listen both together, and we should know what I've got to learn." Mr. Amelia nodded, and began to straighten out the roll of paper. "Would you take a glass of wine the while, gentlemen?" He rang the bell and ordered a bottle of champagne (whenever he wanted to be hospitable he thought of champagne; though for his own part he could discern no charm in that beverage, and would sooner have drunk ginger-beer), and the wine being brought, he produced a box of cigars and laid it on the table. He was beginning to enjoy a cigar by this time, and had some discrimination in the matter of tobaccos. The waiter uncorked the bottle, and frothed out three glasses of its contents. Mr. Lochleven Cameron and Kimberley each lit a big cigar, and Mr. Amelia seating himself, with one little leg cocked over the other and his pert hair staring straight up with self-importance in every fibre of it, began to read.

"My lord, and gentlemen,—In appearing for the first time before you as a candidate for parliamentary honours, I feel myself bound to declare that I do not approach you in that capacity—and never should have approached you in that capacity—of my own initiative. I did not feel, however, that I should be justified in disregarding the friendly pressure which has been brought to bear upon me."

Mr. Amelia's voice was what it always had been since Kimberley had first heard it, crisp, hard, loud, and self-possessed to the borders of vain-glory. The unhappy little candidate for parliamentary honours felt that—in Mr. Amelia's tone at least—this protestation of unwillingness sounded hollow and unreal.

"They won't believe it," he groaned inwardly. Mr. Amelia proceeded.

"Your lordship can bear me witness when I say that I only consented to become a candidate for the representation of my native borough with extreme reluctance."

"I'm afraid you must cut that out," said Kimberley. "I was reluctant. I was indeed. But I'm afraid Lord Windgall didn't think so." Mr. Amelia took up a pen from a standish on the table and struck out the sentence. It was not very easy for anything to increase the contempt he had learned to feel for Mr. Kimberley, but everything the millionnaire said and did only served to confirm it.

"Friendly pressure," he read again, "which has been brought to bear upon me. I am fully conscious of my own demerits, and am not at all disposed to vaunt myself as an ideal candidate."

"Oh, dear me," the candidate objected inwardly; "it sounds like bragging." Coupled with Mr. Amelia's voice and Mr. Amelia's manner, it certainly had no air of superfluous humility.

"I have not one word," pursued Mr. Amelia, "to say against the rival candidate; and I shall attempt to win this contest by no appeal to party passion or the rancour of political spite."

"Hear, hear!" said Mr. Lochleven Cameron. "Well turned; very well turned indeed!"

"I have the highest personal respect for Major Septimus Heard." Mr. Amelia did not share in that sentiment, and perhaps his voice expressed something of his private opinion. Kimberley, in his own uneasy shyness, was identifying himself with this speech and with the manner of its utterance. If he could have disassociated the matter and the manner he would have been better satisfied; but he was himself and Mr. Amelia and a nervously sensitive audience all at once, and his uneasiness was compound. "And," Mr. Amelia pursued, "I shall endeavour in the course of this contest to make that respect manifest. For myself, however inadequate my powers may be, I can assure you that in the public service of this borough my heart and goodwill shall never be wanting." The reader's aggressive tone cut Kimberley like a knife. It was actually himself who, under this thin disguise of verbal humility, was openly proclaiming at least an equality with everybody. "I was born amongst you, and brought up amongst you, and I may fairly claim to know your wishes and your needs better than a stranger can ever know them. All my interests are associated with your own; and if I were animated by the most purely selfish spirit I could desire nothing more earnestly than that Gallowbay should prosper. My personal interests and the interests of the borough are identical."

"Admirable!" said Mr. Lochleven Cameron. "I should pause for cheers after each one of those four last sentences." That also seemed cold-blooded to poor Kimberley, and with all the terror he had endured in looking forward to the ordeal which awaited him, he had never had so little stomach for it as he had now. He began to think that if he had left himself to his own devices he would have fared better. Even if he had broken down he would have missed all these painful mechanics.

But then he thought of his shaky grammar and his eccentric h's, and his poor upbreeding and his native shyness, and everything seemed to grow mountainous as he contemplated it, and he to shrink and dwindle into a mere atom full of terrors and reluctance. Mr. Amelia went on reading, and Kimberley could not make head or tail of the remainder of the speech, but sat in dumb anguish asking himself why, oh why, he had ever consented to bear this dreadful unnecessary burden. The exercise lasted twenty minutes, and seemed to have lasted a year. At its close Mr. Lochleven beat upon the table with his walking-cane and cried "Hear, hear!" and Mr. Amelia, as he laid down his manuscript, allowed a faint reflex of his own satisfaction with his own performance to appear in his face. It was an odd thing, and yet perhaps it was natural, that Mr. Amelia should have been reading at his fellow-servant rather than his employer all this time, and that he valued Mr. Cameron's applause more than he would have appreciated Kimberley's, though the one was worth nothing and the other meant money to him.

Kimberley was too shy to dismiss his visitors, unhappy as he felt in their presence, and too timid to run away from them. So they sat and talked above their wine and cigars, and had a good time of it, whilst the host suffered.

"Shall we continue our lesson?" asked Mr. Lochleven Cameron, when the bottle was empty.

"Not this afternoon, I think," replied Kimberley. "At what time can you come to-morrow?"

Mr. Cameron, whose heart was opened by O'Hanlon's whisky and Kimberley's champagne, was about to say that he was free to attend upon his patron at what hour he would, but luckily remembered his former protestations just in time, and assuming an aspect of profound reflection, made abstruse reckonings on his fingers for a minute, and stated that he was disengaged either from nine to ten in the morning or from three to four in the afternoon. Kimberley engaged him thereupon for one hour each afternoon, and dismissed him with his honorarium. Mr. Amelia, having received his dues also, went away with the actor, and the millionnaire sat down lonely in his big and gorgeously-furnished chamber, and stared at the uninviting future.

No man's good nature is quite as complete when he is in pain or distress as when he is at peace, and Kimberley's troubles seemed to untune him for the moment altogether. He found himself in a curiously suspicious mood by-and-by. He was ignorant of the world, and he was slow to think evil, but he

began to wonder whether or not he was in the toils of a conspiracy. Why did Windgall want to push him into Parliament? Was Blandy right, and was the social position he was about to take a necessary preliminary to the matrimonial scheme? And Alice, who seemed so gay, so innocent and bright, had she read his fable when he told it to her, and had her advice been mercenary? Any one of these fancies was bitter, but they were nothing to the fear that Ella also might know the base readiness of father and sister to catch an ex-clerk for the sake of his money, and might look forward to her own fate with equanimity. This was altogether unreasonable in a man who was in love and who wanted to secure the lady; but then he wanted to be loved himself and not quietly stalked for his money-bags. He wanted to make a woman happy, and to find his own happiness there; and if he had been greater of heart he would have seen its impossibility no clearer, but he would at least have torn himself away from a temptation which had so little to offer him. Love him? Why should she love him? He looked at himself in the glass, and could have wept for mortification. Why should Windgall befriend him? Who could care for him? Who had ever cared for him? Nobody would look at him but for his money, and the fortune which had fallen upon him had brought him nothing but sorrow and humiliation. He was happier—oh, a thousand times happier without it.

Suddenly, like a spoken reproach, the memory of the moonlight on the lawn, and the nightingale singing in the wood, came to him, and touched him with a sense of keen ingratitude. He had been happy then, if but for a little while, and if his money had brought him no more than that, it was something to be grateful for.

"The truth is," he said mournfully, "money's spoiling me. Not as I ever was much, but I hadn't used to be as bad as this. I ought to be more 'umble and more thankful. What his lordship said the first day I ever spoke to him was right. 'Wealth has its duties as well as its privileges,' he said, and he's helping me to do them, and I can think nothing better of a nobleman who takes that trouble with me than fancy he wants my money. I ought to be 'artily ashamed of myself."

He felt it, perhaps without great reason, but he was happier in thinking poorly of himself than in thinking meanly of other people.

CHAPTER XII.

The human animal is so constructed that he can become accustomed to the strangest ways of living, and in a little while Kimberley began to find the lessons in platform deportment tolerable. He committed the speech Mr. Amelia had written to memory, and spent many hours in pounding at it in the presence of Mr. Lochleven Cameron. At first it was very dreadful to have to stand there with an audience of one, and to behave as if he were in the presence of a crowd, to smite the table to order, and to wave his hands in obedience to instruction; but in a while he got used to his tutor and suffered but little. In a week or two ambition so far mastered inclination, that he began to occupy a morning as well as an afternoon hour with Mr. Lochleven Cameron, the earlier lesson being devoted to an earnest grappling with that dreadful h. Now that Kimberley was enlightened, he listened to the speech of all men with an ear for the one defect or virtue they might have in this regard, and he went about repeating to himself, "up a high hill he heaved a huge hard stone," or "the horn of the hunter is heard on the hill," or "he eyed high heaven with a haughty air,"—the last being a terrific twister and full of pitfalls. At first he mixed things dreadfully, and his h's got into apparently impossible places, but in course of time he triumphed, and when Windgall came up to town on business and called upon him, he was surprised at the little man's advancement. Kimberley had possessed himself of a book on vulgar errors in English, and had discovered to his horror that his speech was very largely made up of the expressions this valuable little work denounced; and, now despairing and now hoping, he had slaved away at its pages until he had nearly mastered them.

All the while it was love that lent him patience and spurred his courage and awakened his discernment. He began to see that in this one matter of speech lay perhaps the chief outer distinction between the gentleman and the snob, and he determined to abolish that difference in his own case, or to die. To be able to speak in the beautiful Ella's presence, without reminding her in every sentence of the lowness of his origin, was surely to remove one of the barriers which lay between him

and any possibility of her esteem. If he could only be a gentleman after all! It was something to know that the visionary family tradition of the Commodore had come into the region of verified fact, and that Kimberley therefore had good blood in his veins—for the Commodore was a scion of a great house—and it was something to be really entitled to use the crest and motto which adorned his note-paper, and were carved upon his signet-ring. He broke his heart over Cobbett's grammar, and yet he stuck to it. He studied political questions with Mr. Amelia, who was of genuine service to him, and posted him in all the newest crotchets, so that when the awful time of the election actually came, he should know what to say to inquiring voters. He wrestled with the slippery and illusive aspirate, and he read the work on vulgar errors with such devotion as few readers have given to its pages.

Windgall's information turned out to be correct, and that autumn the Government made its appeal to the constituencies. The country got into its usual ferment, and the amiable and, for the most part, high-minded gentlemen who in turn control the destinies of this kingdom received their ordinary meed of frantic adulation and unreasonable blame. As usual, the country was going to ruin head-long, and whilst millions were convinced that it could only be saved by a movement in one direction, other millions were passionately persuaded that it could only be plucked from immediate perdition by a march in a diametrically opposite direction. So the game of pull devil pull baker began—each side believing itself to be the baker and the other to be the universal enemy—which, when one comes to think of it, is a condition of affairs not altogether empty of humour. Kimberley went out for the salvation of his country as gallantly as the rest, and took up his head-quarters at Shouldershott Castle once more. The walls of Gallowbay were plastered with his name in flaming red letters, "Vote for Kimberley, the People's Friend," "Kimberley and the Constitution," "Kimberley for Gallowbay." He cowered piteously at first when he saw these things, and when the mob came out to cheer him and hoot at him as he drove with Windgall to the central committee-room, he blushed and turned pale with such rapid alternation that his noble friend began to feel afraid for him.

My lord did almost everything that could be done for him by another. He was Kimberley's spokesman in all little emergencies at the meetings of the committee, he took the chair for him at his principal meetings, and was indefatigable in his services.

Mr. Amelia was living at free quarters at the "Windgall Arms," making constant notes for Kimberley's speeches, and issuing biting squibs against Major Septimus Heard—an occupation which naturally afforded a refined delight.

The Honourable Jack Clare must needs enlist himself as the Liberal candidate's lieutenant, and it was his unlucky interference which imparted bitterness into the Gallowbay contest. The young man had persuaded himself that if ever there had been amongst the mercenary scoundrels of the earth one qualified to be king and captain of the crew, that man was the Earl of Windgall. That this was a somewhat harsh opinion on an embarrassed nobleman who wanted one of his daughters to marry a millionnaire, will be generally admitted, but Clare clung to it as if it had been a gospel. He had never seen Kimberley, but he hated him with singular honesty. Major Heard was his friend, and it was not difficult for the young man to bring himself to the belief that nothing but friendship and political conviction made him so ardent a partisan in this conflict. Lord Montacute was horrified at Jack's defection from the family line of politics, and actually came down on a visit to Gallowbay and delivered one or two speeches in support of Kimberley's candidature. But the younger man made cleverer speeches than his brother, and Montacute's interference only made him more important and more popular. A young swell slanging the institutions of swelldom, and casting in his lot with the vulgar, is pretty sure of a following, and the roughs at least were with the Honourable Jack to a man. Jack was very severe on the Liberal-Conservative candidate and his noble bear-leader. He was very scornful and uncivil about the "triple alliance," as he called it, "of the lawyer's clerk, the penny-a-liner, and the noble earl—a masterly combination which secured money, venom, and prestige." Mr. Amelia certainly found venom enough to justify Clare's illusion, and the feeble editor of the *Gallowbay Banner* was deposed from the political chair during the contest, in order that the clever little man might write the election articles. Clare never guessed as much, but people knew pretty well the ground of his obvious dislike for my lord Windgall, and to outsiders the personal interest gave a sense of piquancy. He thought the story of his old courtship of Lady Ella Santerre a secret shared only by half-a-dozen people, but the whole world knew of it, and the girl's father was aware of that latter fact, and had his own private shames about Kimberley. These made him like Clare none the better, and

an enmity which bade fair to be lifelong began to spring up between them.

All this brought great pain to Ella's heart, which had been sore enough already. She could not justify her lover, and she knew nothing of the general suspicions about her father's intriguings to secure Kimberley. Once, in driving through Gallowbay with her father and Alice, she saw Jack in the street, walking arm-in-arm with Major Heard. He raised his hat, but Windgall took no notice of the salute. Ella bowed in answer to it, but she saw a look of wrath and accusation in the young man's face which was almost as hard to bear as it was difficult to understand. The Earl looked at her and saw her turn pale at the sight of her old lover, but he allowed the incident to pass in silence.

On this walk, which he pursued after he had parted with the Major, Jack encountered no less a person than Mr. Lochleven Cameron, and was passing him by without recognition, when the actor advanced and claimed him.

"Captain Clare?" said he, flourishing his hat and startling the gloomy, meditative lover. "I think I am not mistaken. I have the honour of addressing Captain Clare?"

"Yes," said Jack, recovering himself. "Mr. Cameron, I think?"

"The same," said Mr. Cameron, with a certain massive playfulness. Mr. Cameron's nose was a little more pink than common that afternoon. "I had the honour of dining with you"—he called it "doyning," for he was off his customary guard—"at the Cannibal Club in London last autumn."

"I remember perfectly," said Jack. "Are you playing here?"

"In a sense I am," said Mr. Cameron. "I take a subordinate part in the farce of 'The General Election.'"

"Oh!" cried Jack, "In Gallowbay?"

"In Gallowbay," says Mr. Cameron, with a slow wink. "I am training the little millionnaire in elocution, sir, and though I say it who should not, I have a confoundedly unpromising pupil. It goes to me heart," he pursued, with a sudden change from an air of persiflage to one of deep emotion, "to see how he desgreeces me tuition."

"Don't tell tales out of school, Mr. Cameron," said Jack lightly, beginning to perceive his companion's condition.

"Oi?" inquired the actor with surprise. "I am as close as sealing-wax. But I could a tale unfold which would make the fortune of a comic writer. That reminds me. Have you seen Sylvester down here?"

"I know no one of that name, Mr. Cameron," said Jack, extending his hand to say farewell.

"I beg your pardon, Captain Clare," said Mr. Cameron with unnecessary gravity and dignity. Then playfully, "Ye know him as well as ye know me. Sylvester, the comic artist, that sang the parody on 'The Low-backed Car' at the Cannibals."

"I remember," said Jack, with a new interest. The mention of the name pleased him for a reason of his own. "Is he staying here?"

"He is at the Prince Regent Hotel, on the Marina. He is taking a little sniff for health's sake at the briny," said Mr. Cameron, holding on to Jack's extended hand. "There is no dearer or finer fellow in the world."

"A charming fellow," said Jack, shaking the actor's hand, as a hint for the release of his own. "I must go now, Mr. Cameron. Good afternoon." Mr. Cameron saluted him with much *empressement*, and stood for half a minute after Jack had left him with his feet drawn together heel to heel, and his hat in the air. Jack made a *détour* and reached the hotel the actor had mentioned. Mr. Sylvester leaned against a column outside the building gazing at the sea, and picking his teeth with an air of idle enjoyment. He recognised the Honourable Captain Clare instantly, and fired a funny Irish story at him at once. Among the other wrongs the Sister Island endures is this, that her sons minister to the amusement of the hated Saxon. In the rank and file of journalism—on the stage—in the province of pictorial art—how thick the victims muster. They are not unhappy in this ministration, but surely Erin mourns above them. The wicked Saxon gold bribes them to the service of an alien race, and really they seem to be fairly pleased with that cruel circumstance, though they are for the most part intensely patriotic.

"Are you resting altogether," asked Jack, "or would you accept a commission for a drawing?"

"I don't mind a day's work," said the artist, placidly. "Come inside and have a whisky-and-soda and a talk about it." Jack accepted this invitation, and they entered the hotel together. "What is it?"

"I want to have a slap at that Conservative lot," Jack declared, gloomily.

"Any idea?" asked the artist, lighting a cigar from Jack's case.

"I want you to find the idea," answered Jack. "Lord

Windgall is bear-leader to Kimberley, the candidate, and I want the pair pictured somehow."

"I know where I could hit my lord," said the artist, who had heard the popular belief expounded, though he was ignorant of Jack's interest in that theme. "I don't think the candidate would like it either."

"Very well," said Jack, "hit him. This is a piece of secret service," he added. "Major Heard is not inclined to adopt this line of warfare. I am. You will look to me for payment."

"All right," said Mr. Sylvester cheerfully. "I'll do it for a five-pound note and the fun of the thing. You'd better have a lithograph, and then there'll be no expense for engraving. But I must either see the pair or get portraits of them."

"There are photographs of Windgall on sale at all the photographers, but I've never seen one of the other fellow."

"I'll get to have a look at him," said the artist. "That'll do as well as fifty portraits."

"You can't draw a man's portrait after once seeing him?" said Jack.

"Can't I?" replied the other. "Come to the window and point out anybody you know who happens to be passing."

"There's Warren, the banker," said Clare. "A well-marked face."

"Yes," said the artist, "he's a good subject." He scanned the passer-by attentively, and then turning his back on the window, drew from his pocket a sketch-book and a pencil. He drew a dozen slow and careful strokes, looked at them with his head aside, added a dozen others, and pushed the book across the table. It was a caricature, but the likeness was absolute. "I never want to look at a man twice," said Sylvester, with pardonable complacency. "When could I see Kimberley?" he asked, a moment later.

"At any one of his meetings," said Clare. "I don't know the little brute, or it's a hundred to one he's about the town, and I could point him out to you." Kimberley had no redeeming feature in Jack's eyes. He knew nothing about him except that he had been poor, and now was wealthy, but that Windgall should have sought him out and angled for him was enough to make Jack hate the harmless man. This scoundrel of a nobleman could break an honest heart in cold blood, and be eager to bestow his daughter, with all her delicate breeding and her patrician instincts, on a cad with money. It was natural to include the nobleman and the cad in a common hatred.

Wrath and contempt consumed him when he thought of Windgall's baseness, and his thoughts were rarely absent from that theme. "Send me a copy of the thing when you get it done, will you?' he asked, rousing himself. "I must go now." He wanted to be alone.

"All right," said Sylvester cheerfully. "I'll make 'em sit up."

Jack went away, half inclined to despise himself for having set this particular machinery going, but he found some consolation in thinking of Mr. Amelia's mosquito-like proceedings on the other side. In the mean time, the artist strolled out, with meditative mind, revolving satires. He paused beneath the windows of Mr. Kimberley's chief committee-room.

"That'll do very nicely," he said, and throwing away the stump of his cigar, he entered the "Windgall Arms" and asked if Mr. Kimberley could be seen. It turned out that Mr. Kimberley and the Earl of Windgall were at that moment together, and Mr. Sylvester, having sent in his card, was admitted to their presence. "Mr. Kimberley?" he asked, looking from one to the other. Kimberley nodded, and the artist looked at him genially. "You will see by my card," he said, "that I represent an illustrated journal. I should be obliged if you would favour me with a copy of your photograph. For publication," he added sweetly.

Kimberley looked at my lord, as if for guidance, and my lord took the card from his extended hand.

"Mr. Sylvester of the *Scourge?*" said Windgall. "We shall be very glad to oblige you. Eh, Kimberley?"

"Certainly," said Kimberley; and a waiter was summoned and despatched to a photographer for a copy of Kimberley's portrait just then newly being issued for the delight of the Gallowbay public. In the waiter's absence Windgall was pleased to compliment Mr. Sylvester on his singularly amusing and clever sketches, and at Kimberley's invitation Mr. Sylvester took a drink and smoked a remarkably enjoyable cigar. When he had secured the unneeded portrait, the artist went his way, and, behold, outside the hotel was a coronetted carriage, and seated therein a young lady of great beauty, whose appearance delighted even the fastidious artistic eye.

"Is that Lord Windgall's daughter?" he asked one of the waiters, who lounged in the porch of the hotel.

"Yes, sir," said the waiter. "That is the Lady Ella Santerre, sir."

Mr. Sylvester took a good look at her, and marched off with three faces in his memory instead of two only. As he walked he smiled with a seeming of hidden humour; and it might have been evident to anybody who chose to observe him that he was greatly amused by his own fancies.

"Standing?" he said inquiringly to himself, as he looked about him. "Standing, copper-plate and lithographic printer. Where are you, Standing? A-ha! I see you."

He strolled into the lithographer's front shop.

"Are you a practical lithographer?" he asked the man behind the counter.

"Yes, sir."

"You do your work here upon the premises?"

"Yes, sir," again.

"Can you turn out large-sized work?"

"Any size you like—in reason, sir."

"Very well. I want to make a drawing on a good-sized stone, say for a double-crown sheet or thereabouts, and I want you to get two hundred to begin with as soon as you possibly can."

"We have a first-rate artist on the premises, sir," said the lithographer. He was a modest man, and did not care to indicate himself more clearly.

"I'll do this bit of work myself, if you please," returned the artist; and the lithographer, learning that he wished to begin at once, led the way to the office. Here, in a little while, Mr. Sylvester found himself provided with all he stood in need of, and with his hat on one side, his cigar cocked up in one corner of his mouth, and his amused smile broadening and fading by turns, regarded his materials for a time in silence and then set to work. The proprietor of the place watched him, and waited with some interest to see what was coming of this amateur effort. Every draughtsman has his own way of going to work, and Mr. Sylvester's was peculiar. He laid down a number of detached lines all over the surface before him, and for the space of five minutes or so these lines seemed to have no meaning at all, though they were put on with a free and steady hand, and were as pure as anything ever yet produced by graver. Then, by the interpretation of later lines, it became clear that a line at the top of the prepared surface indicated the curved form of the top of a wide-awake hat, and that one at the bottom stood for the toe of a boot, and another half-way down for a rag on the skirt of a coat. The detached lines all over the surface drew

together, and there were three figures in a group already life-like. The figures were those of a man, a maiden in fashionable attire, and a monkey. The monkey was perched on a barrel-organ, and the hand of the maiden extended towards him something which had the appearance of an oval disc. By-and-by, the lithographer, watching with more and more interest, saw the head of the monkey make almost a leap into the precise likeness of the Liberal-Conservative candidate. A while later, and the organ-man, who was dancing to his own accompaniment, disclosed himself as the very counterfeit of the Right Honourable the Earl of Windgall. From the organ-man's wrist to the monkey's waist was passed a chain of fantastic pattern, which grew into legible letters, and these being finished spelt "Mutual Interest." The scroll-work front of the barrel-organ became also legible, and spelt "Two Millions Sterling." When this device became apparent, the lithographer began to chuckle and crow behind the artist, and that inventive personage himself being thus inspired, let off a short laugh of enjoyment at his own humour.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the lithographer, "but are you Mr. Sylvester?"

"That's my name," said the artist, turning with half a blush and a whole smile. "What made you ask?"

"I knew your hand, sir," returned the lithographer, in a voice mournful with admiration. "I see your work in *The Scourge* every week, sir. Look out for it regularly, sir. A wonderful sweet line you've got, if you'll excuse me for saying so. What are you going to do with the lady, sir?"

"I'll show you," said the draughtsman, lighting a new cigar. "Let me see if you know her."

The lady as yet was featureless. There was a charming little hat, a curl of hair or two escaped from it, and a fine line expressed the cheek and chin. Mr. Sylvester worked with more than common care upon this part of his drawing, but very soon the face of Lady Ella shone there. If there was something of caricature in his presentment of Windgall and his *protégé*, the draughtsman at least spared the lady and did his best to give her justice.

"Know her?" said the lithographer. "This is the best of the three. What's that in her hand?"

The artist answered by setting to work anew, and the oval disc with irregular edge turned out to be a cheese-cake, in which currants were arranged to spell "Social Position," and this the

lady was bestowing on the monkey with an air of charming graciousness and condescension.

"Capital! capital! capital!" cried the lithographer. "The town *will* have a grin at this, and no mistake."

Mr. Sylvester did not model this work of art by shading, but by a bold thickening of the outline, and his labour being rapidly finished, he gave the tradesman a written order on Captain Clare for payment, requesting that early impressions might be sent to Captain Clare and himself, and took his leave well pleased.

"I'll tell you what," said Mr. Standing, as the artist was lounging away, "I'll have two or three copies sent down to Shouldershott Castle by a safe hand I know, and have 'em posted on the lodge."

He and Mr. Sylvester both chuckled enjoyingly at this generous proposal, and were neither of them very ill-natured men as a general thing. By old prescription everybody has a right to be disagreeable at election times, and neither of them knew the pain this humorous effusion would create. Mr. Standing was better than his word, and not only was the lodge at Shouldershott Castle decorated as he proposed, but the whole frontage of the lower story of the Windgall Arms was covered with Mr. Sylvester's pictorial satire. One humorously-minded burgess, who voted on the Liberal side, and was as a natural consequence convinced that Kimberley's compact with Windgall was unholy and deserving of all reproof, got hold of three copies and addressed them separately to the Earl, the candidate, and the Lady Ella. It happened that Windgall himself opened the post-bag that morning, and having seen the placard addressed to himself, confiscated the other two, plainly recognising their character, and burned them. But Kimberley saw the dreadful thing billed all over the town that day, and Ella, roaming in the park with Alice, found a copy of it pasted firmly to the smooth surface of a giant beech, the bark of which had been stripped away by lightning. The girl simply thought the drawing infinitely coarse and vulgar, and she failed altogether to see why her own presentment was included in it. Naturally enough, almost her first thought was of her lover. He was fighting on the other side, but he was too generous, too manly, to countenance such a mode of warfare as this. It would have been almost a heartbreaking thing at the moment to have known that this shameless insult to herself, her father, and his guest, had been levelled at Jack's instigation.

But as when the tyro throws the boomerang and it returns from his unskilful hand and stuns him, Jack was the one who suffered most from the use of this satiric missile. He was in his own quarters at barracks when he received his copy of the placard by the post. He unfolded it with a grim sense of satisfaction. Sylvester was certain to have done something smart and clever, and he had promised that he knew where to hit the noble lord and Kimberley. But when Clare had the sheet opened out before him and grasped its purport, he took himself by the hair with both hands and stood upright for one moment frozen. Then he began to rave and rage about the room and to stretch out hands that itched and longed for Mr. Sylvester. Once free from the routine duty of the day he lost not a moment on the journey to Gallowbay, and there, after a hurried consultation with Major Heard, who was almost as wounded and indignant as himself, he gave orders to the Liberal bill-stickers to go forth and obscure every one of the obnoxious placards.

"If," cried the Major, pulling at his long moustaches, with his Quixote face aglow with wrath, "if I knew the man who had instigated this I would travel fifty miles to pull his nose. By heaven, I would, sir."

"If I could lay my hands upon the man who did it," cried Jack, and his feeling was perfectly real, though he knew how disingenuous he was, "I'd break every bone in his skin."

Fortunately for all parties concerned, the humorous artist had found himself on the previous evening recalled to town, by reason of the serious illness of a colleague, and so Jack Clare and he met no more for a twelvemonth.

The popular fancy was hugely tickled by the rough satire of the picture, and Mr. Standing kept the lithographic stone and worked off two or three hundred copies for private circulation, at prices varying from a sovereign to half-a-crown apiece, so that he at least made a good thing of it. But it so embittered the contest that the opposing parties got to hate each other.

> Away to heaven, respective lenity,
> And fire-eyed fury be my conduct now,

was the cry of partisans on either side. But rage as they might, the issue of the conflict was a foregone conclusion, and when the whole terrible ordeal of a contested election had been gone through, Kimberley found himself face to face with one still more dreadful to contemplate. He had now to confront the British House of Commons, for he was declared Member for Gallowbay by an overwhelming majority.

CHAPTER XIII.

Mr. Amelia entering at the front door of No. 158, Waverley Terrace, Waverley Road, N., was aware of certain unusual sounds which proceeded from the front parlour, immediately over which his own lodging room was situated. The sounds were indicative, either of revelry, or of public business conducted on a principle unusually warm and enthusiastic. Some twenty or thirty voices raised a mighty shout of "Brayvo" and "Ear, ear," and there was a noise of stamping feet, and clapping hands, and a great rattling upon tables. Mr. Amelia stood a moment to listen, with his latch-key in his hand, and when the tumult had somewhat subsided he heard his landlord's voice.

"Mr. Vidler, sir," said the landlord, "your jolly good health and song."

"'Ealth and song," chorused the voices which had before been raised in applause, and a second or two later the hammering on tables was renewed. The lodger walked up-stairs in silent condemnation of these noisy tokens of good fellowship, and lighting his bed-room candle betook himself to adding up little columns of figures in his pocket-book. He kept account of his incomings and outgoings to the uttermost farthing; and being but newly returned from Gallowbay, where he had made a pretty good thing of it in the service of Mr. Kimberley, he was now accurately estimating his total profits on that engagement.

"First-class fare received both ways," said Mr. Amelia, with his pencil-point at his lips, "three pounds sixteen shillings; third-class fare paid both ways, twenty-six shillings. Profits on railway expenses two pounds ten. Hotel expenses for twenty days, charged twenty guineas,—twenty-one pounds: actual bill received and paid twelve pounds ten: profit on hotel expenses eight pounds ten. Profit so far eleven pounds. Service, twenty-two days at a guinea a day, twenty-three pounds two shillings: total to the good, thirty-four pounds two. I have done very well with Mr. Kimberley, but a general election does not happen every day. Confound that noise below. I won't endure it."

He rang his bell with some violence, and at the same moment there sounded a loud rat-tat-tat at the front door. More

revellers presumably. Mr. Amelia would never have been very willing to allow himself to be disturbed by such an uproar as that which arose from the merry-makers below, and it seemed to him unpardonable that a man who in three weeks and a day had cleared and saved the sum of thirty-four pounds two shillings, should be so annoyed. He would have respected in another man the ability to make so much money in such a time, and he felt that the quality should be respected in himself. Of the two summonses, that at the door was first answered, and when the landlady appeared, she said :

"A gentleman to see you, Mr. Amelia. Did you ring, sir?"

"I rang," returned Mr. Amelia, "to request you to ask the gentlemen below to be a little more moderate in their merriment. I can't hear my own ears for the noise they're making. Who is the gentleman who wishes to see me?"

"The designation's flattering," said a voice on the landing without, "but I am the person indicated. Can I come in?"

Mr. Amelia thought he knew the voice, but was scarcely sure.

"Come in," he answered. "Ask them to make less noise below."

"I'll speak to the gentlemen," said the landlady, and returning from the doorway, she made room for Mr. Kyrle Maddox to enter.

"How are you?" asked the new-comer, extending his hand to Mr. Amelia. "I thought I'd look you up. You've been to Gallowbay again, haven't you? I heard about you from Rider."

"I did not see you there," said Mr. Amelia, curtly. "How do you do?" Mr. Maddox seated himself and produced a pipe. "I don't smoke in my bed-room," said the little man with crisp severity.

"No!" said the other, with an accent of surprise. "Doesn't matter. I can wait a bit. How are you getting on?"

"What are you doing in London?" asked Mr. Amelia, ignoring the question.

"I? Oh, I'm at large for a little while. My uncle died a week or two ago and left me a little money—not much, but more than I should ever earn as a reporter—so I came up here after the funeral, and I'm going to have a try at literature." He blushed as he said this, and added, "I've got a lot of rubbish, 'prose and worse,' as Jerrold said, and I shall try to knock it into some sort of form."

"You have done quite right to come to London," said Mr. Amelia, softening to his visitor. "You will acquire a style which is only to be acquired in a capital city. There is a provincial mark on all men in the provinces."

"Mm. Don't know," said the youngster, trifling with his pipe. "I say, you cleared out of Gallowbay rather suddenly. What was the matter?"

"I do not care to talk upon that topic," answered Mr. Amelia. "A private communication of mine was shamelessly misused, and I did not think it consistent with my own self-respect to remain."

"Mm," said the youngster again. "I asked Rider, of course, but he wouldn't say a word about it, except that he was very sorry, and that it was very unfortunate."

"I should think it extremely probable," said Mr. Amelia, "that Mr. Rider would think the affair unfortunate."

"It wasn't Rider who abused your confidence?" said Maddox. "It couldn't have been Rider."

"I have nothing against Mr. Rider," returned Mr. Amelia. "He was not at all to blame."

"I'm glad to hear you say so," cried the younger man. "I shouldn't like to hear any harm of Rider. He's a beautiful old fellow. I'm fond of Rider."

Mr. Amelia offered no response, and there was an interval of silence. Maddox was about to speak again, when there came a tap at the door, and the landlord entered. He was a man with a wonderfully smug face, with a long black wisp of whisker on each side of it. The fashion had been common a year or two before, and whiskers thus worn were currently known as Piccadilly Weepers. The landlord's naturally smug aspect was increased by the close-clinging, well-oiled shining hair he wore; and he stood with his toes pointing outward—one foot a little in advance of the other, and the legs bent slightly at the knee—whilst his shoulders inclined a little forward, and permitted his arms to dangle in front of him, as if they were suspended from his body by a string. It was the precise attitude of a flunkey in a farce.

"There his a few gentlemen below, sir," said the landlord, who was painfully impressive with the aspirate, "who is hanshus to have the honour of your presence, sir."

"Very few gentlemen, indeed," said Mr. Amelia, "judging by the noise they made just now." The landlord missed the point of this, and responded affably.

"Two dozeng, sir, parrycisaly." Mr. Maddox gave an irrepressive flourish with his legs, and the landlord regarded him doubtfully. "This gentleman, halso," said the landlord. "We shall be very pleased, sir."

"May I ask the occasion of the gathering, sir?" said Mr. Maddox.

"It is a little club, sir," replied the landlord, closing the door and washing his hands engagingly. "A little club, sir, composed of retired suvvants, sir. We meet at each other's houses, sir, once a week, and having forty members, it takes some time between the gatherings at any special house, sir. Hi am hin the chair this hevening, sir, and shall be delighted to introduce you —beg pardon, sir—to hintroduce you."

He made a very special point of the aspirate in this last case to atone for its accidental omission, and Maddox was unaffectedly delighted with him.

"Personally," he said, "I shall be charmed." Mr. Amelia had been disposed to resent the landlord's invitation as an intrusion on his dignity, but he thought better of it, and contented himself with an evasion.

"This gentleman and I are engaged at present, Mr. Webling," he said with dignity. "Perhaps we may be able to avail ourselves of your invitation later on."

"Thank you, sir," said Mr. Webling, drooping his shoulders a little further in acknowledgment. "The gentleman as have slep' in this apartment has holwiz jined us. We keep it hup, sir, till a hearly hour."

With this statement he bowed himself away, and Mr. Amelia's late junior laughed rejoicingly.

"Isn't he beautiful?" he cried. "Don't let us lose a minute of him. The sunny, smiling grace of the thing!" He fell into an imitation of Mr. Webling's posture. "That, I think, is the hattitude." Mr. Amelia smiled faintly. "Lord!" cried the junior, "if I could only live beneath the roof of such a man and see him when I wanted! What does he charge a week for his whiskers? Are his legs an extra to his lodgers?"

"You seem to think Mr. Webling amusing," said Mr. Amelia.

"Amusing?" cried Maddox. "Do you think they are all like that—all the retired suvvants below-stairs at this moment? For pity sake, don't lose a minute of them. They keep it hup till a hearly hour? Delightful! A refrain for a ballad. The Slave Released: the Ballad of the Retired Suvvant. *They keep it hup till a hearly hour.*"

Mr. Amelia's humour did not lie in this direction, but there was something contagious in the lad's high spirits, and he laughed. Maddox sat down and began to laugh also, and since there is, happily, no emotion so catching as that of laughter, they had a good five minutes of it, with an amusement altogether disproportioned to the cause. When they had allowed mirth to run itself to a standstill, Mr. Amelia carefully put out his candle, and they descended to the lower room together. The apartment was not very spacious, and the twenty-four gentlemen who occupied it were rather crowded already, but they made room for the new-comers, and squeezed themselves into corners to do it, with great good humour.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Maddox, making himself at home at once, "I am believed by competent judges to be a rather special hand at a bowl of punch, and I should take it as a favour if I were allowed to brew one here." Mr. Webling smiled upon his right hand neighbour—a smiling inquiring and persuasive—and the right-hand neighbour turned and distributed the smile. "Thank you," said the youngster, laughing round. "Mr. Webling's domestic will, no doubt, procure the materials. Permit me to write out the list."

He busied himself with note-book and pencil for a moment, and then tearing out the leaf upon which he had written, folded a sovereign in it and gave it to the landlord, who rang the bell, and the little packet passed from hand to hand until it reached the door, which was opened with some difficulty by reason of the presence of a very fat man in the corner whose chair blocked up the entry.

"Get the things marked down on that slip o' paper at once," said the fat man, "and put the kettle on the fire to bile."

"And Mary Hann," said Mr. Webling, "wipe out the largest washing-basin, and put it in the oven. Make it hot. You hear, Mary Hann?"

"Yes, sir," said Mary Ann from without, and a minute or two later she was heard to close the door at the foot of the area steps.

"You was saying, Mr. Bordler," said the fat man in the corner next the door.

"Yas," said a simpering man at an opposite corner. "I was a saying that his lordship was despirate poor—despirate poor, as everybody knows. He's got a puffick houseful of gells, and only one at a merriageable age. The young feller was also dreffly himpoverished by the excesses of his nubble pa, the late Lord Montacute."

"They was said to be fond of each other, was they not, Bordler?" inquired the chairman.

"Yas," said the simpering man. "They was. Things was said as I would rayther not repeat. Perhaps they was true—perhaps they was not; but that is neither here nor there, so to speak."

"Exactly," said the fat man, "but I am told as there is a novah reach after the gell now, Bordler."

"What is after the gell?" inquired the host and chairman.

"A novah reach," replied the fat man with dignity.

"Yas," said Mr. Bordler, "a feller with three millyings of money."

"If he's got three millions of money," inquired a personage who had not hitherto spoken since the entry of the two guests, "what's he want to over-reach the young woman for?"

"Novah reach," said the fat man, "is a foreign expression, sir. It signifies a low feller as has come into money."

"Recent, I believe, is the meaning," said another.

"You are right, Vidler," said the fat man with solemnity. "A low feller as has come into money recent. Go on, Bordler."

"The timber on the nubble Earl's estate," pursued Mr. Bordler, "is a coming down. That I am aware of for a fact. His ludship is hanshus beyond anything to get the gell merried or engaged in time to save the timber."

"I am told the gell is handsome," said the fat man. "I remember her mother as a fine attractive figure of a woman."

"Hensom?" cried Mr. Bordler. "Remarkable so. Perhaps the style *is* is a leetle countryfied—not altogether so dellikit as some tastes go for. For my own part, I like the dellikit style. Now, the Lady Hellenor Carford is my beau idea of what a woman should be."

"You was bred-up in Kent, Bordler," said Mr. Vidler, "and your leaning towards hop-poles is only natural."

At this sally the assembled gentlemen laughed, and beat upon the table with their glasses. Mr. Vidler looked about him with a smile of conscious humour, and received a nod of recognition from Mr. Maddox, who found the whole conversation peculiarly engaging and enjoyable. The punch-bowl, the kettle, and the materials for the promised beverage appearing in the very middle of the laughter, took nothing from the general hilarity, and the room being so crowded that the servant could find no access to it, the utensils and the bottles were taken

round the edge of the door and passed hand over hand to Mr. Maddox, who sat with Mr. Amelia at the head of the table—one on either side of the chairman. There was an impressive silence for a space whilst Mr. Maddox sliced the lemons, and taking advantage of that fact, he spoke—

"Gentlemen," he said, whilst he worked with careful vigour, "I feel a pride and a pleasure in my accidental presence here this evening, which I should not find it easy to exaggerate in expression. I am myself of humble birth, and I have never had the opportunity, which all of you have so richly enjoyed, of associating intimately with the titled classes. But, gentlemen, it is an Englishman's proudest boast to know a lord. There are thoughtless people who have sneered at that fact, and held the sentiment up to ridicule. But surely it is a natural sentiment, and a gracious one. You yourselves must admit, gentlemen, that to the happy chance of association with barons, and earls, and viscounts, you owe much of that grace and that refinement which distinguish you from the vulgar herd. There may be those among you, gentlemen—I do not wish to feel too proud—but there may be those among you who have held intimate communion with Dukes."

"Vidler," said Mr. Bordler, "have enjoyed that distinction." Mr. Maddox, with the kettle in one hand and a large tin basting-spoon in the other, bowed to Mr. Vidler.

"The British aristocracy," he pursued, "is the pride and pillar of our constitution. I will ask you by-and-by to drink a toast." There was considerable applause at this announcement, and the popular opinion of Mr. Maddox was that he was a remarkably agreeable young fellow, with an unusual flow of graceful language. For a little time that genial youngster occupied himself seriously with the preparations of the punch, and the grateful odours of whisky, rum, lemon, and a dash of maraschino, were borne to the nostrils of the assembled members of the club so sweetly that men spoke in murmurs when they spoke at all, and when four-and-twenty pairs of eyes watched the glass to the brewer's lips as he tested the compound, four-and-twenty pairs of lips moved in unison with his, and every palate took the flavour of the brew in bright anticipation.

"And now, gentlemen," cried Mr. Maddox a little later, "are your glasses charged? I give you the British Aristocracy, and their tried and true and old associates, the members of this club."

The toast was received with enthusiasm, and the assembled

gentlemen drank it standing. When they had resumed their seats somebody raised a cry of "Vidler," which was loudly taken up.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Vidler, rising, "I feel the compliment to the full. I should like to take it to myself, but it does not belong to me. It belongs, gentlemen, to our host and chairman, Mr. Webling."

At this the soul of Mr. Maddox exulted newly, for he had conceived a great admiration of the charms of Mr. Webling, and but that he was surrounded by a very embarrassment of riches, could scarcely have borne to remove his eyes from him. Mr. Webling, however, turned out disappointingly, and after the execution of an ignominious verbal flounder sat down again. Later on Mr. Vidler proposed the health of Mr. Maddox, and the company sang "For he's a jolly good fellow" with so much fervour that the tenants of the houses to right and left appeared to tender a joint remonstrance. When these gentlemen had been smoothed down by a promise that there should be no more singing, Mr. Maddox returned thanks in a neat and appropriate speech, and shortly afterwards the party broke up.

"I hate the smell of tobacco in a crowded room," said Mr. Amelia, as he and Maddox quitted the apartment. "If the night is fine I will walk a little way with you, and get a taste of fresh air after that abominable atmosphere."

The night was fine and moonlit, and for a little way they walked in silence.

"You didn't seem so pleased as I was with that charming assortment of people," said Mr. Maddox, nodding sideways and backwards to indicate the late place of meeting.

"Perhaps I was," said Mr. Amelia, with peculiar dryness, "but I was thinking."

"I am in a reflective mood," said the junior, after another space of silence. "I'm wondering whether if I were a nobleman I would keep a flunky."

"I presume," said Mr. Amelia, "that you would do as other people do."

"To eat a man's bread, and to wear his clothes and live in his house, and to receive pay for it, and yet to render no service and owe no gratitude—it is a happy lot! Does the equal of the British flunky exist elsewhere? I am young—I am untravelled—I am ignorant—I ask for information like Miss Dartle. I will go into the world and seek his peer, and if, as my heart foretells, I find him not, I will return to the land of

my birth and hire a flunky, and I will dress him gorgeously, and tend him, and feed him, and worship him, and bask in his splendours. When I think of the flunky my mental knees are loosened, and I fall a babbling. I have no words for him.

> Beam, beam, beam
> In thy plush and thy lace, Flunkee;
> And I would that my tongue could utter
> The thoughts that arise in me."

"Your punch is curiously potent, Mr. Maddox," said the little bantam of a man behind him. "I fancied you drank very little of your own brew."

"It is not punch," said Maddox, pausing beneath a lamp and regarding his companion with a somewhat glassy eye. "It is emotion. Do you know whom they were talking about when we got into the room? Do you know who the handsome gell was, whose mother the fat man remembered as a fine attractive figure of a woman?"

"No," said Mr. Amelia. "Do you?"

"It was Lady Ella Santerre," said the junior with some show of temper. "Fancy nurturing a great fat brute like that to criticise the points of your wife and daughters, and your friends' wives and daughters! And the man who simpered in the corner of the fireplace, who thought the lady's style a leetle country-fied, and not altogether so dellikit as some tastes go for! To hear them name a lady is to feel ashamed. If Juno had gone to heaven and come down to earth again as an angel she might have been fit to be that charming lady's ladies'-maid."

"This is rather a change of sentiment," said Mr. Amelia. "It is not so long since you were paying for punch and making complimentary speeches to them."

"Compli—," began Maddox, "complimen—." He controlled himself and held out his hand: "Good night. It isn't your fault, Amelia. You were made so."

"My dear fellow," cried Mr. Amelia, "you must let me have my little joke. I thought you meant that speech as a satire all along. I knew you did."

"You have depressed me," said Maddox, mournfully. "I had thought I had an auditor."

"So you had," cried the little man. "I was heartily amused. I was indeed. It was a most amusing evening altogether." He was as much aggrieved at being thought to have missed a jest as he would have been at the charge of picking a pocket. "Give

me your address," he said, to cover his annoyance. "We must see something of each other." Maddox pulled out a card-case and Mr. Amelia saw the gleam of a gold watch-chain. He noticed that the junior's aspect had greatly changed for the better, and that he was not only well-dressed but tidy, whereas in the Gallowbay days he had been invariably disordered, and generally dirty in hands and linen.

"He has got a little money," said Mr. Amelia when they had parted. "And he has some brains into the bargain. I wonder if he will do anything. I shall do something, without his chances, but I wish I had them. It is a great thing to have staff in hand. I think I see my way to something out of this evening. What was it that fellow O'Hanlon said? 'Every lane's end—every turning, yields a careful man work.' That club of servants is an evident mine, and there ought to be a way to work it. *The Scourge* would give something to have a reporter sitting regularly at its meetings, I'll be bound."

These reflections brought him to his door, and when he entered he found Mr. Webling still up, and busily engaged in tidying the room in which the meeting had been held.

"Mr. Webling," he said, entering the apartment, and closing the door behind him with rather a secret air, "this club of yours affords you unusual facilities for acquiring information about the doings of the aristocracy."

"Infamation, sir!" cries Mr. Webling. "There is scusly hennything in the houses of the great which is not known at the club, sir, as soon as it is known at home."

"Ah," said Mr. Amelia, thoughtfully. "I know a way, Mr. Webling, in which you might make a very considerable addition to your income—a very considerable addition."

"Do you, sir?" asked Mr. Webling.

"I do, indeed," returned his lodger. "I should think you might see your way to fifty pounds a-year."

"I wish you'd show me how, sir," said the landlord with unusual vivacity.

"It's late now," Mr. Amelia answered, "we'll talk the matter over to-morrow if you have an hour to spare. Good night." The landlord returned his salute, and Mr. Amelia mounted the stairs and lit his candle. "All these people communicate with their old fellow-servants," he mused as he sat on the bedside. "They know everything that goes on. If I had the money I would do it myself. One or two light articles, perhaps a novel by a good hand, and all the rest fashionable intelligence and

gossip. A paper, a weekly paper, established on those lines would go like wildfire. It would cut out *The Scourge* itself." He kicked off his little shoes and stared at them thoughtfully. "I must think this over. I believe I have found the way to fortune."

CHAPTER XIV.

To have the passionate desire of your heart within reach and not to dare to stretch out a hand and take it, is likely to make you neither proud of yourself nor happy. Bolsover Kimberley had scarcely a doubt left in his mind as to the Earl's willingness to bring about a match between him and the Lady Ella or her sister. Of course he was a very poor-spirited little fellow, and had no pretence to the fine instincts which adorn a gentleman, and yet it was not all cowardice which made him shrink from the declarations he longed to offer. Perhaps after all he was not such a snob as he fancied, and had finer instincts than he guessed, but it was undeniable that he was a weak creature.

He was a member of parliament and a millionnaire. Mr. Lochleven Cameron and the book on vulgar errors in English had done him so much good between them that when he took time he could speak without offending a fastidious ear. These were his advantages, and he was aware of them, humble as he was, and they gave him some little sense of self-possession. On the other hand, he had been nobody to begin with—he had had no education worth talking about, notwithstanding the seven years of life in a long-tailed blue coat and canary-coloured stockings—and he was singularly insignificant in appearance. These were his disadvantages, and he recognised them with groanings. He did not know that he was monstrously and absurdly overdressed. There are hundreds of men who ought to know that one thing of themselves much better than poor little Kimberley could be expected to know it of *him*self. There is no power that will the giftie gie us to see ourselves as others see us. Shall we say "More's the pity," or "Thank heaven"?

You must please understand definitely that this young man was in love, and that howsoever small his capacity for a grand passion might be, he could hold as much of love's maddening elixir as would fill him. If there was a bowl big enough to use

in a game of cup and ball with Uranus it could but be full when it held its utmost, and you can say as much of a thimble. These are obvious reflections, but we are apt to lose sight of them. The young swell, who is superbly handsome, and has a great fortune, who is irreproachably tailored, and writes a charming love song, is a person in whose heart-pangs we find it easy to feel an interest. I can scarcely ask you to feel an equal interest in Kimberley's awkward raptures and self-condemning fears, but I will beg you to remember that they existed.

Now love, notwithstanding the absurd exaggerations of poets, playwrights, and novelists, is a mighty passion, and when it really gets the grip of a man it carries him along, willy nilly.

In the House of Commons itself, and in the tea-room, the smoking-room, the library, and the lobby, Kimberley learned many things, and amongst them much of the precise nature of the Earl of Windgall's liabilities and embarrassments. He learned that the wonderful old trees in Shouldershott Park were coming down, that the whole Shouldershott property was deeply involved, the house in Portman Square mortgaged, as the Earl himself had said to Ella, "to the chimney-cowls." He began to know that if he proposed to buy off all the encumbrances which weighed upon the house there was scarcely anything in the Earl of Windgall's power which that distressed nobleman would not do for him. And he could do that and never feel it. He could charge the expenses of the whole mass of liabilities on the yearly produce of his own estate without feeling it, or he could discharge them all at once with a scarcely perceptible diminution of his fortune.

Though he longed to do it he dared not yet propose for the Lady Ella's hand, but the consideration of these things seemed to open up an easy way to a declaration. He turned the scheme over in his own mind for days and days, and at last he wired desperately to Mr. Begg to request that gentleman's presence in London. By this time he had a set of resplendently furnished chambers in which everything was of a glistening newness, but on the whole in very good taste, for he had not trusted his own judgment, but had given an artistic designer of furniture *carte blanche*. Mr. Begg waited upon him in these princely rooms, and found him in a Persian dressing-gown with a cord of crimson silk about his waist, and an absurd smoking-cap, embroidered with outlined figures of dancing demons, stuck with a shame-

faced jauntiness sideways on his head. He offered so clammy a hand to the lawyer, and was so agitated in his demeanour, that Mr. Begg made up his mind that his client had got into a scrape, and said to himself with a profound sense of his own sapience—"A fool and his money. A fool and his money." The fatuous way in which Kimberley strove to stave off the approaching confidence confirmed him in his opinion.

"Well, Mr. Kimberley," he said at last, "shall we get to business?"

"Yes," said Kimberley. "You are Lord Windgall's lawyer as well as mine?"

"Yes," returned Mr. Begg, and instantly abandoned his first theory for another. "Sits the wind in that quarter?" quoted Mr. Begg.

"I am told," said Kimberley, blushing fiercely and fidgeting with an ivory paper knife, "that Lord Windgall is very much in debt."

"That is unfortunate," said the lawyer, "but you may hear that kind of rumour about almost everybody."

"I want to know, if I can," pursued Kimberley, not paying much heed to this stroke of fence, "exactly what he owes, and who has claims on him."

"Ah!" said Mr. Begg, with a soft slow expulsion of the breath. He stuck his gold-rimmed double glasses on his nose and looked at his client. "May I ask the motive of your curiosity?"

Kimberley shifted in his chair under the lawyer's scrutiny and was silent for half-a-minute. At last he blurted out, "I want to buy his debts."

"Ah!" said Mr. Begg again, precisely as before. Then he dropped his glasses on his waistcoat and leaning back in his chair set the fingers and thumbs of his right and left hand very precisely together. "That would give you a great power over his lordship, Mr. Kimberley," he said at last after a lengthy pause.

"Oh! it isn't that," cried Kimberley. "I don't want that. I mean it friendly, I assure you. I do indeed."

"You look for some advantage?" said the old lawyer.

"Mr. Begg," said Kimberley, lifting his eyes for a second and then dropping them again, "I must ask you not to press me. I must indeed."

"However much I wished it," answered Mr. Begg with thoughtful deliberation, "I could not prevent you from carrying

out your object. But I have enjoyed in a somewhat unusual degree the confidence of the Earl of Windgall, and I have been honoured for many years by his lordship's friendship. Anything in the nature of a threat—anything in the nature of an unfriendly pressure—which might be brought to bear upon him through any instrumentality of mine, and which might in the course of business be avoided by any persuasion, or any ability I could employ, would be a grief to me. I will not ask you for any confidence you may not feel inclined to repose in me, but I confess I should like to know your ultimate object, Mr. Kimberley. You may be sure that I feel strongly in this matter, for you could get anybody else to do your business, and it is not a lawyer's way, as a rule, to endeavour to thwart the wishes of a client whose affairs are so considerable as your own."

"That makes me respect you very much, sir," said Kimberley. When he had said it he was nine-tenths frightened and ashamed, but casting a glance at the lawyer he saw that the old gentleman smiled at his ingenuous declaration, and he felt easier about it at once. "I mean nothing unfriendly," he added. "I sha'n't do anything unfriendly, even if his lordship doesn't——" He paused in confusion, and took off the absurd smoking cap to rub his fingers through his hair.

"Well now, Mr. Kimberley," said Begg with an altered manner, as if he felt himself a little more at home with his client, "it is my clear and unavoidable duty to you to tell you that this will be a very considerable enterprise. It will cost a pretty penny."

"I—I suppose I can afford it?" said Kimberley, not defiantly, but questioningly. Mr. Begg laughed.

"Why yes," he said with a shrug of the shoulders; "it can't ruin you. You can afford it, Mr. Kimberley, beyond a doubt. But there is a bottom to the bag, you know, even when it holds more than a million. I *have* seen just such a fortune as yours squandered in a lifetime, and the man who owned it was buried as a pauper. That was a strange thing, but I saw it."

"What would it cost to do it?" asked Kimberley.

"Before I give you an answer," returned the lawyer, "forgive me if I press one question. Can you give me a definite promise that in case I act for you in this matter you will permit me to act for you all along, and that you will not press Lord Windgall—in any way—in *any* way, Mr. Kimberley—on account of these liabilities without my knowledge?"

"Yes," said Kimberley, "I promise that."

"Very well," said Mr. Begg deliberately. "I believe I am in the possession of his lordship's complete confidence." He was not, but his belief was natural. "His liabilities, speaking roughly, amount to about ninety thousand pounds. An annual charge of something like four thousand five hundred a year upon the estate is annually set apart for the payment of interest. The estate is not worth seven thousand per annum altogether. The principal mortgagee insists upon payment or foreclosure, and money is tight just now and can only be raised at a sacrifice. I have tried my hardest, but I can't buy a thousand pounds for his lordship at less than seven-and-a-half per cent. There is a general feeling abroad that the estate is involved beyond its capacity to pay. That is not a belief which is at all flattering to the management of any firm, and it is not well founded, but it exists and we cannot help it. As a consequence the timber in the home park will have to go, and I confess that if I can see any way of saving that I shall be deeply gratified."

"Will you kindly pay the mortgagee," said Kimberley, "and transfer the mortgage to me?"

"At the present rate of interest?" asked Mr. Begg.

"Yes, if you please," Kimberley answered. "You can tell his lordship that the timber need not be sold, but don't mention me in the matter at all. And will you be good enough to buy up all the other liabilities for me, Mr. Begg?"

"You had better give me written instructions to act," replied Mr. Begg, and Kimberley having set paper, pens, and ink before him, the lawyer drew up a letter (which the client signed), setting out with legal precision the instructions Kimberley desired to convey. "And now," said Mr. Begg, when the letter was written, signed, and transferred to his own pocket-book, "in case the Earl of Windgall should be reluctant—— Let me put it in another way. In case you should ever be disposed to be rid of this investment—this proposed investment—you will never make it a matter of pressure with his lordship, Mr. Kimberley."

"Never," said Kimberley earnestly.

"It is not an unsound investment," pursued the lawyer, "but it is not one I should advise as a purely business arrangement. Now suppose that you should ever wish to press a sense of obligation upon his lordship?"

"Oh, sir," cried Kimberley in an eager, wounded voice, "I couldn't do it. I couldn't do such a thing."

There would seem to be a limit beyond which the human soul will not suffer itself to be tortured by shyness, and that limit being reached, it is noticeable that the shy man becomes suddenly bold, the shrinking coward blossoms suddenly into a hero. It is a strange transformation—almost as wonderful as if a toad-stool should suddenly become an oak—but it happens sometimes. In Kimberley's case it happened now.

"Mr. Begg," he said (and the old lawyer knew instinctively that the confidence hitherto denied was about to be offered), "before I came into my money I was in a very poor station of life. I was a copying clerk in a lawyer's office, and I had thirty-five shillings a week. Even at that time I—" his head dropped, his heart beat noiselessly, and he could have wrung the perspiration from his hands—"I—I formed an attachment. Of course I knew it was very 'opeless and silly and all that."

Mr. Lochleven Cameron and the little book on vulgar errors were forgotten at this moment, and Kimberley glided back into his familiar accent, and his old locutions.

"I hadn't ought to have thought about it—to have let myself think about it—but if it hurt me it didn't hurt anybody else, and I was living very lonely to be sure and had nothing much to care for, or to care for me. It was an attachment to a lady I had never spoke to, and was never likely to speak to, but I don't know that it didn't make me 'appy after all. I ain't much now," said the poor little Kimberley, "am I? But I'm a better man than I should have been if I had never seen her. Well, I got my money, Mr. Begg, and the lady's noble father asked me to his house, and I went there as a visitor. I *was* un'appy then, and I am now, because I know what a difference there is between us. But for their station in life they are very poor, and I've got more money than I know what to do with, and I thought I might say to his lordship that whatever way he decided it would make no difference to my feelings, and I should like him to take the papers I wanted to have with me and use them as a wedding present."

It was very lamely and impotently put, but it was touching for all that, though a snob spoke it, and an elderly lawyer heard it.

"That is very creditable, Mr. Kimberley," said the lawyer after an interval of silence, whilst the little man sat newly crushed before him. "But in case his lordship should feel himself compelled to decline the alliance he would also be compelled to decline the gift."

"He couldn't," cried Kimberley, with a weak triumphant flush. "I could burn the papers."

"He might still insist on making payment," said Mr. Begg with a droll smile.

"There's no law to compel a man to take another man's money," answered Kimberley.

"I can't dispute the legal accuracy of that statement, Mr. Kimberley," said the lawyer with a broader smile. "Laws, I suppose, are made because they are wanted, and I have never met a case in which any legal machinery was needed to compel a man to receive money. As for the delicacies of the situation —they lie between Lord Windgall and yourself." Mr. Begg mused for a little space. "He has improved remarkably," he said to himself. "Not that there isn't room for improvement still, but he has effected a good deal already. Really I don't see why *I* should throw cold water on the scheme. He's a good-natured little beggar, and he's a member of the House of Commons, and he has a pot of money. I don't care to think of Lady Ella Santerre marrying such a fellow, and yet—come now!—if I had a daughter of my own I should think her a dreadful fool if she refused him."

"You'll do what I want, won't you, Mr. Begg?" asked Kimberley.

"Well," said the old lawyer, "I suppose I must. You would like the business arranged quickly, of course?"

"Oh yes," said Kimberley, "as soon as possible."

"And you say I can ease his lordship's mind about the timber?"

"You might say you had arranged for somebody to take up the mortgage on the old terms, but please don't mention me at present," returned Kimberley: and with a word or two more Mr. Begg took his leave.

"It's not a romantic exterior," said the lawyer as he walked away, but it's a very romantic attachment, and a very romantic story altogether. I wonder what Windgall will have to say to him. He has been in the mire so long that I fancy he won't be particular as to what hand pulls him out of it. My little millionnaire isn't afraid to put the shovel in, it seems. A dozen such attachments would make a difference to him." Mr. Begg laughed at that fancy. He had not often had an experience so singular as that which Kimberley had afforded him, and he could scarcely get the memory of it out of his head for a day or two.

It did not take long for Mr. Begg to get through the necessary business for the transfer of the mortgage, and Windgall was informed of his good fortune at once. It never occurred to his lordship to ask by whose good offices the ancestral trees had escaped for this time. Mr. Begg arranged these business matters, and expended a great deal of care and trouble over them; a care and trouble with which the profit reaped by his firm was not at all commensurate. But even amongst lawyers the feudal sentiment is not altogether dead, and Messrs. Begg, Batter, and Bagg would much rather not have made a penny a year out of Windgall's affairs than have lost them altogether. My lord knew this, and had a sort of pride in it, and at the same time a sort of gratitude for it.

Even when everything was prepared for him Kimberley delayed to put his scheme into execution. A house of his—the best of his properties—having lost its tenant, he went to live in it, and Gallowbay saw much of him. Shouldershott Castle also saw much of him, and he and Windgall were a good deal together. He was still shy, but the newness of his position was beginning to wear away, and the sense of his possessions did not gall him so much as it had done. The moth was always fluttering about the candle, and fluttering away from it, and the meaning of his flutterings was so open to the general eye that the county talked without disguise of his attentions to Windgall's second daughter, and of his lordship's evident encouragement.

In these days there was a novel sense of peace and rest upon the spirit of the master of Shouldershott Castle. He had ceased to torment himself about the meanness of fishing for Kimberley. Partly because he had grown used to him, and partly because the world at large had long since been defied, and very largely because Kimberley himself had so much improved, the Earl thought less of the bitterness of that sacrifice than it had seemed likely he would ever be able to think of it. The timber was saved, and an open shame was thereby avoided. And, wonderful to relate, nobody bothered him for money. It was an understood thing in the public mind that if Kimberley married Alice Santerre there would be a *quid pro quo* paid somehow and somewhere. He would have to pay for his fair Circassian, and at least the market price would be expected. But when the fatal hour came; when Kimberley spoke at last, and his lordship consented, then, if the young lady refused, her father knew that trouble would follow upon these halcyon days. The patience of creditors would not last for ever, but would grow

brittle on a sudden and break off short. Well—if it were a fool's paradise it was paradisiacal still, and he would live in it until his time came.

Sometimes when Kimberley appeared his lordship would experience a little flutter of hope and fear, and never without reason. The little millionnaire always came prepared to speak, and always *looked* as if the weight was on his mind. He had been a millionnaire for a year-and-a-half, and for nine months Member of Parliament for Gallowbay, before he found courage for the plunge. Then he drove up desperately to the Castle and asked for a private interview with his lordship.

"My lord," he said, when they were closeted together, "I want to speak to you on a matter of the greatest importance." Nobody can tell what agonies of hope, what heart-searchings, what desperate resolves of courage, and what reactions of fright he had been through before he had come to this, or in what a sick whirl of emotions he sat when he thus addressed the noble earl.

"Perhaps I guess your purpose, Kimberley," said his lordship, who was in something of a tremor also. To his amazement Kimberley began to lug from his overcoat pocket a bundle of legal-looking papers. This was done in a fumbling and clumsy way, and Kimberley's shaky hand turned the pocket inside out and could scarcely manage to restore it.

"My lord," said Kimberley, "I want to ask your lordship's acceptance of these papers. I want to ask you to accept them, if you please, before I go any further."

His lordship took them and looked them over, understanding them at a glance.

"I—I scarcely see my way to that, Kimberley," he said, in strange amaze at this curious method of opening the negotiations which he knew were coming.

"My lord," began Kimberley a third time, panting a little in his speech and keeping his white face bent downwards as he spoke, "I want you to take them. They are my property, and if you don't take them I shall burn them, whatever happens. I am going to ask a question, my lord, and all the happiness of my future life depends on your lordship's answer. But I want you to take them first, and then you can feel free, my lord, to say Yes, or No."

"I fail to understand you," said his lordship. "I am not a wealthy man, but I trust you are not inclined to think so ill of me that you feel tempted to try to bribe me for any purpose."

He succeeded in throwing an imitation of a laugh into his voice as he said this.

"My lord!" said Kimberley. "I don't want to bribe you, my lord, and that's why I ask you to take those papers now, before I say another word. You know what they are, my lord?" He took up the packet, now somewhat scattered, in both hands, and looked at Windgall.

"Yes," said his lordship, "I know perfectly well what they are."

"Then——" said Kimberley, and rising and walking to the fire-place, he dropped them in a heap upon the smouldering coal. My lord seized the poker and raked them all, a little soiled but unsinged, into the fender, and then falling on one knee picked them up, and finally carried them to the table.

"Kimberley," he said then, "if I permitted that I should accept from your hands a gift so enormous that I could refuse you nothing in return for it. I dare not lay myself under such an obligation to any man alive."

"They are yours, my lord," said Kimberley. "I shall never touch them again. No power on earth should ever make me take a penny on account of 'em!"

"My dear Kimberley," cried his lordship, desperately, "I *can't* accept them. I can't take these things in the dark. What do you want in return for them?"

"Nothing, my lord," said Kimberley, and so stood silent for a minute. Then somehow he found courage, and looked Windgall simply in the face. "If I don't speak and act like a gentleman, my lord, you must forgive me. I was very poorly brought up, and I haven't had time to learn everything. I want you to feel, my lord, that you are not under any obligation. I want you to feel that you can afford to send me about my business, my lord."

"Great Heaven!" cried his lordship, hot with shame and misery, and yet feeling that he had no right to be angry. "Do you know how insulting all this is? Do you know how horribly humiliating it is? What do you want to ask?"

"I am very sorry that you see it in that light, my lord," said Kimberley; "I didn't mean it so. As for the papers, you can't make me take them back, my lord. They're done with. There isn't a single mortgage on your property, my lord, and whatever you say can't make any difference."

"Well," said his lordship, with a great sigh, "go on: what do you ask in return for this?"

"I don't ask anything in return for it, my lord," said Kimberley. "You're under no obligation to me, my lord. But——" His face began to blush, and he fell to stammering and wringing his hands together. "I want to ask you, my lord, for the hand of your lordship's daughter, Lady Ella."

CHAPTER XV.

His lordship stood wonder-stricken and almost horrified at this declaration. He had never dreamed, since Kimberley had first come beneath his roof, that he would ask for Ella, but he had schooled himself to the trembling hope that her sister might be chosen, so that he experienced now much such a curious shock in mind as one feels bodily on taking up a light weight for a heavy one, or falling a step on what seemed to be level ground. There is not much in the thing, but it brings you up with an amazing shake, and a sense of disaster. It took Windgall a full minute to pull himself together, and a minute's silence in such a case as this is quite a gap in nature.

"My dear Kimberley," said my lord, awaking to a sense of the extreme awkwardness of so prolonged a silence. "Forgive me for the surprise I must have manifested at——I was unprepared——I was not altogether unprepared——I had expected——"

He trailed off into silence, and for the time his self-possession played truant. Ella? That altered the matter. She knew more of the world than Alice, she was older and more competent to judge of things, and to tell the truth his lordship was a little afraid of his eldest daughter, good and affectionate as she was, for she had a most queenly way with her and could look superb scorn at any baseness.

As for Kimberley—his heart failed him altogether. He dared to love so high above him, and he dared to hope and to ask. But there was nobody in the world who could appreciate more clearly than himself the insolent audacity of his passion. The earl's evident amazement wounded no self-love in him, but his own hopes lay at his heart like lead. He had dared to hope. He had been brought near enough to hope. Two years ago, when the passion that had now grown to such a height had been

a pretty sentiment to sigh over, to thrill over in his own meek weak way, to blush at in the night time, as he lay alone, the sense of hopelessness had never been difficult to bear because he had never lived in the same hemisphere with hope, and the goddess of his poor dreams had shone for him at an astronomic distance.

"So far as I am concerned," said his lordship, "I can say nothing. I will submit your proposal to my daughter, but—I am powerless—altogether powerless. Will you——You are naturally anxious for an early answer, and perhaps it will be best to consult Ella at once. Shall I do so, and will you await me here?"

Kimberley had shot his bolt, and for the time being he had no great nerve or resolution.

"I'd rather go home, my lord," he managed to say, "and I shall be obliged if you will send me a message."

He went away, leaving the papers scattered about the table, and never thought of them. My lord eyed them askance, but said nothing. If Ella should say "Yes" he could take them, and there at a stroke was an end of all the troubles which had weighed upon him since he had come into his encumbered estates, and his almost barren title. If she should say "Yes" ——but what an If was here!

Windgall saw his guest to his carriage, and shook hands with him with agitated warmth, and then returning to the library, sat down, and turned over the papers which meant so much to him. He began to see more clearly all that Kimberley had intended, and curious as it may seem, he began to find something remarkably worthy of respect in Kimberley's character. The thing had been done as clumsily and with as little tact or grace as was easily conceivable, and yet there was a certain manliness, courage, and honesty in it. It was insulting, it was humiliating to him, to show so clearly a belief that he could be influenced by the proposer's money, and yet, after all, the belief was so obviously true. It was abominably awkward: it was munificently generous. It was snobbish: it was princely.

If Kimberley could fitly have translated himself, he would have shown to more advantage, though he would simply have had to say that the lady must be unhampered in her choice. If she could freely stoop from her imperial place to pity him, if she could take his devotion and his wealth for her own service and be happy—well, who but a lover shall say what then? But that she should be drawn to him with a chain, that she should

take his money for her father's sake, and should come unwillingly, drawn by fear or duty, and should be unhappy with him, and should scorn him and despise herself: all this was scarcely bearable to think of.

Taking it altogether, Windgall was nearer to a proper appreciation of Kimberley's feelings than might have been expected. Perhaps few men could be wholly angry at a proffer like Kimberley's. Ninety thousand pounds is a regal gift, and it was in no sense as purchase-money, but purely as a gift that the little man had offered it. Of course it was impossible to accept it, and yet it was impossible to force the giver to take it back again. There was some consolation in that thought. If Kimberley chose to fulfil his threat and to burn the papers, or if he simply repudiated the earl's payments, and sent them back again, there would be nothing for it but to sit down under that indignity,—and keep the money. The pride of so poor a man as Windgall had not life enough to stir up any great wrath in him as he thought of that alternative.

It was not in the least degree in the world a temptation, but merely and purely a fancy, when he thought how easy it would be to stir those papers into the fire, and write to say that the match Kimberley had proposed was simply an impossibility. Windgall could never have been capable of that, under any conditions whatsoever, but he thought about it idly, as a thing within his power. He heard Kimberley's words again—"There isn't a single mortgage on your property, my lord, and whatever you say can't make any difference." He rang the bell half mechanically, and on the servant's appearance sent a message to Ella, asking for her presence. She came smilingly, though she saw the anxiety in her father's face, and dreaded some new trouble.

"Sit down, my dear," said the earl, placing a seat for her near the central table. "I have something I want to say to you." He began to pace up and down the room, wondering how he should begin. "I want you to understand, my dear," he said, nervously, pausing in his walk to push some trifle backwards and forwards on the table, "I want you to understand that you are free to act just as you will, and that I am nothing more than an ambassador in what I have to say."

Ella had but newly returned from a walk in the park, and was unaware of Kimberley's visit of that morning, but perhaps it was not altogether to be wondered at that she supposed her father's speech to be the preamble to an offer of marriage.

"Let me tell you all the circumstances," he went on, beginning his march up and down the room again. "You see those papers on the table? They have been given into my hands this morning. They are worth ninety thousand pounds, and they have been offered to me, expressly without reserve or condition, freely, and as a gift. They include every serious liability I have in the world, and if I could accept them I should be free of the nightmare of debt which has weighed upon me ever since I was one-and-twenty."

Ella had arisen from her seat, and stood now with both hands on the back of her chair, her glance following him to and fro.

"And you cannot accept them?" she asked.

"They were offered expressly without condition," he repeated, "and the giver declares that nothing I could do or say, will make him take them back again. But in the same breath with that unconditional gift——" He stood still with his face half-turned away from her, and glancing at her sideways, and finding her eyes still fixed upon him, walked on again in visible agitation.

"In the same breath with that unconditional gift——" she said, prompting him.

"He asked me," said Windgall, pausing once again, "for your hand in marriage." He took courage to look at her as he spoke, and saw that she had lowered her eyes. She was very pale, and her fingers pressed tightly on the faded morocco of the chair. "Your suitor, Ella," he went on, "is a wealthy man, and is acquainted with my affairs. He seems to have thought that by this princely gift he would secure an answer which could not be prejudiced by any sense of my own liabilities, and the offer of the gift, which might otherwise have been insulting and humiliating, was made with a sense of delicacy and a fineness of feeling which—in short, a great delicacy—a most gentlemanly consideration."

She kept silence though he paused and walked up and down the room half-a-dozen times before he spoke again.

"Ella," said the earl, laying his hand timidly upon her arm, "you know, I am sure, that there is nothing in the world which I would ask you to do if I thought that by it, or through it, you would be unhappy—permanently unhappy."

He talked rather to persuade himself than her.

"I am sure of that, dear," she answered with downcast eyes. Did she guess? Windgall asked himself. Did she know who the suitor was? Would she suffer any of the shame which

had assailed himself? He almost dared to hope she would refuse.

"I should not," he said, "in any case have had any course open to me but to consult you. I could not even have said No without your knowledge. But there are circumstances——"

"I know, dear," she answered in a composed voice.

"You know our miserable necessities, Ella," he pleaded, but a swift gust of shame heated him from head to foot, and he moved away from her. "I can't force your inclinations in a matter like this, my dear. I leave you to exercise your discretion. You—you haven't even asked your suitor's name, Ella."

She looked up and saw his grey features writhing after a smile, and at that she ran to him and threw her arms about his neck, and a sudden tear stung bitterly at each of the poor nobleman's eyes.

"My—my dear," he said brokenly, "I won't have you grieving about it. I won't have you doing a thing for my sake which you may repent all your lifetime. I'm—I'm not a heartless father, Ella. You must not let the thought of me weigh too much with you."

"If it depends on me to put an end to all your troubles, dear," she said, "they are ended already."

"You know who it is?" asked her father. He felt desperately that the long delay of Kimberley's name only made the matter seem the worse. "Shall I," he asked lamely, "shall I make Kimberley happy?" He stood with an arm about her waist, and both her arms were round his neck, and she was taller than he, so that he felt a certain loss of dignity, as if he were being sheltered and protected in a way which was scarcely creditable to his manhood. She looked down at him, and answered simply

"Yes."

"You are the best daughter in the world," he said. She shook her head with a sad smile, and then stooped down to kiss him. He moved suddenly from her embrace, and took to pacing the room once more, whilst Ella walked slowly to one of the windows and looked out across the leafless park.

"Will you—take time to think, Ella?" asked Windgall pausing near her. She turned upon him with a smile, which he remembered many and many a time afterwards, it was so wan and cold.

"No, dear," she answered, "I shall not change my mind."

"You will be unhappy," cried the wretched nobleman. "You will break your heart, my dear. I can't—I can't sell my child for money."

This was inconsistent, no doubt, but it was not unnatural. The noble earl had a tolerably good heart, but a torpid imagination, and until this longed-for thing was actually upon him he had not realised what it might mean.

"I shall not be unhappy, dear," said Ella. "Let us speak of it no more just now. Do you write to Mr. Kimberley, or do you see him?"

"I promised him an answer by messenger," replied the earl. He had made his protest. He could not help making it, but he was not sorry to find it disregarded. And, after all, might he not have been agitating himself without reason, and walking in a shadow altogether vain—cast only by his own foolish fears? She could have whatever her heart might desire if she married Kimberley, and in her own household she would rule to a certainty. She would be able to secure brilliant matches for her sisters, and that of itself would be a great joy to her, and would compensate for much. If *she* could only think it so, Kimberley's offer was a stroke of almost unalloyed good fortune. He was no less presentable than hundreds of men who, in these subversive days, had intruded themselves into good society, and his shyness was a great point in his favour. He would not obtrude himself upon the notice of the distinguished guests who would throng his wife's saloons. It was probable that he would hide himself when she gave her most brilliant entertainments, and with her own birth and beauty, and her husband's money, Ella could make for herself an enviable place in the world. As he thought of these things, his late terrors and repentances began to seem most foolishly exaggerated. Ella was not a child, but a grown woman who knew the worth of wealth and the social advantages she could secure through a rich marriage. He and she had no reason to be anything but happy; and having made up his mind to this conclusion, he remembered her smile.

But he would have no more repentances or fears; and sitting down at once at the centre table, he took up a pen with intent to write to Kimberley. Ella, without a word, approached him, bent down and kissed him, and so left the room. He noticed that, in stooping to him, she had laid her hand upon the table, and touching one of Kimberley's scattered papers there, had suddenly withdrawn her hand as if the contact had stung her.

When Ella had gone Windgall sat nibbling at his pen, not by any means a lordly figure, and feeling on a sudden wondrously old and cold.

"My dear Kimberley," he wrote, and then sat drearily staring at the paper. "I have the happiness to inform you," he went on suddenly, eager to have the whole thing over, "that I have laid your proposal before my daughter, and that——" There he stopped, and took to nibbling at his pen again.

"Confound the fellow," he broke out; "why should I study terms with him? And that—and that she empowers me to inform you of her acceptance of your flattering offer." Flattering offer! Flattering offer, be hanged! "I presume," he began to write again, "that you will afford me an early opportunity to congratulate you personally. I am, my dear Kimberley,

"Yours faithfully,

"WINDGALL."

He addressed this missive, and then rung the bell and despatched a servant to Gallowbay. Kimberley had been on the tenter-hooks all this time, and had endured as many sorts of mental misery as one man can well hold in the course of a single day. In all the stories he had ever read where the young man of humble breeding turned out to be a prince and straightway married the princess, the love-making appeared to be conducted with a light heart, and the disguised prince in especial seemed to be happy when the bonds of servitude were thrown away and he claimed the lady as his own. The story has been told a thousand times, and Kimberley knew it in more than one of its multitudinous forms. Perhaps that happy prince, the hero of the story, had been aware of his own high birth all along, perhaps he was not by nature a shy man, like Kimberley; or the iron of enforced servitude among the swineherds or the scullery boys had not eaten so deeply into his soul as had Kimberley's service in the canary smalls and his long years of drudgery in Mr. Blandy's office. Even when my lord's missive reached him, and he knew himself the Lady Ella's accepted lover, he was very, very far from being happy. He had not the remotest idea as to how he ought to act in this new condition of affairs, and the thought of the possibly laborious etiquette of the great was like a nightmare to him. Ought he to ride over at once post-haste and express to Ella the raptures proper to the occasion? Somehow the raptures did not rise, though he loved her (if ever

a man loved a woman yet) with all the force of his nature. Ought his first visit to be paid in formal state to her father? Ought her father to call upon him?

The book on etiquette, though ransacked from cover to cover, unfortunately afforded no hint of guidance on this momentous theme, and Kimberley had no one to advise him. He had bidden the messenger to stay and to partake of some refreshment, and my lord's servitor was obliging the Kimberley household with the details of the day's proceedings so far as they were known in the meagrely-peopled servants' hall at Shoulder-shott Castle. Whilst Kimberley sweated and stewed over the book on etiquette above-stairs, the ladies and gentlemen below learned how he had been closeted with his lordship for half-an-hour, and how on his taking leave his lordship had been closeted with the Lady Ella for half-an-hour, and how the Lady Ella had been remarked on as looking a leetle palish and disturbed, and how it had been generally assumed that her sister Alice had been the object of the millionnaire's attention, and how that fiction was now exploded.

Kimberley's own man, lounging at the fire, was of opinion that whoever got him would have no catch apart from his forchin, which was no doubt considable, and my lord's faithful servitor was good enough to say that his people was poverty-struck enough to put up with anythink. Where is the old servant now-a-days—the servant who ate his master's bread with loyalty, and was faithful to the house that gave him shelter? Is he quite dead and vanished, and is there none left but the over-fed spy, the private detective, whom you pay to slander and despise you?

After infinite labour of spirit, Kimberley resolved to write a letter, and in the course of an hour or two he spoiled half a ream of paper or thereabout. Finally, he produced a note which, though a little bald and inexpressive, was not so wretched a failure as he thought it.

"Dear Lord Windgall," he wrote, "I am greatly obliged by the kind promptitude of your reply." That if you will look for it is a sentence to be found in that valuable work *The Universal Letter Writer*. "I am profoundly sensible of the honour you do me in accepting the proposed alliance." *Vide* 'Letters from a Suitor of Comparatively Humble Birth to the Father of his Fiancée.' "I shall be glad to know when it will be most convenient for me to call and pay my respects to Lady Ella and yourself."

My lord's servant took this letter home with him and Windgall answered by the post.

"My dear Kimberley, You will make us much happier than we could otherwise be by waiving all ceremony. If you are not otherwise engaged come over to luncheon to-morrow, and let us begin to feel at once that you are one of the family."

Kimberley, not in the least prepared to feel like one of the family, obeyed this invitation. Lady Ella gave him a hand like marble, and he stooped over it and kissed it. It was a dull, dull, dreadful meal to all three who sat at table, and it is not too much to say that though all three suffered, the millionnaire's heart was the heaviest and the sorest. For if Ella suffered she had the consolation, so dear to the nobler sort of women, that she was a sacrifice. Offering herself to a loveless life, she freed her father from all monetary troubles, and she had persuaded herself that this was her appointed duty in the world. And if Windgall suffered, he had, locked in the drawers of his library table, as solid a compensation as he could well ask for. But Kimberley had no consolations, and knew only that he had expected somehow to be happy, and was, in spite of his prosperous wooing, more miserable than he had ever been before.

He had bought that morning, at the chief jeweller's at Gallowbay, a magnificent ring, and he made shift to produce it after luncheon, and to offer it to the lady. He dared to take her hand and to slip the ring upon the appropriate finger.

"Lady Ella," he said, with a profound dejection, "I can't tell you 'ow 'appy you have made me."

He knew that he had fallen again into the old vulgarity of tone, out of which he had taken such pains to struggle, and he would have rejoiced if the floor could have opened and have swallowed him.

Ella made no reply, but her father, anxious to preserve a seeming satisfaction, put his arm about her waist and kissed her. Her cheek was like ice and her whole figure trembled.

"Come away, Kimberley," cried the earl, with a ghastly hilarity. "We have a hundred things to talk about."

Kimberley bowed to Ella, and she inclined her head in answer. The earl with his arm drawn through the little millionnaire's, bustled him with simulated gaiety from the room. There were bitter compunctions in his heart, and he was alarmed for Ella's self-restraint and his own.

Left thus alone, she listened to the retreating footsteps, until having travelled the unclothed oak of the gallery they were lost upon the carpet of the stair. Then, gliding swiftly to the door, she turned the key, and with outstretched arms and ghostly face, fled back and cast herself at full length upon a couch, and hid the hateful world from her eyes, and cried bitterly, with hot tears distilled and low moans torn from the very heart of despair.

CHAPTER XVI.

I VENTURE to believe that the veracious history of the struggles of a young man who has gone up to London with intent to earn his living by his pen, has never yet been written, and that when it comes to be written it will make very entertaining reading. It will have, of course, to be done in the most intimate manner, and will have to include so many curious studies and strange episodes, that perhaps its author, when he comes, will do best to postpone the publication of his work until he himself is comfortably tucked away under that grassy counterpane beneath which even the most reviled of mortals can sleep in peace. Such a history would probably include the narrative of many feasts of reason and unreason: it would tell of many acts of kindness, and many of heartless oppression: it would lay open to the world's view the ramifications of the oldest society, the most mixed, intimate and discordant, to be found on the surface of this planet. How generously befriended, how zealously helped by kindly men who are almost strangers, how pitilessly swindled, how stabbed in the back, or slily pinched there according to the nature of the assailant—how wealthy with a transient half-sovereign, how poor with a liberal income, how robbed by the good Samaritan and succoured by Barabbas, how buffeted and caressed is the young acolyte!

Adventures are doubtless to the adventurous, and there are many prosperous gentlemen now settled in literary pursuits who will be able to tell you with a clear conscience that this picture is absurdly overdrawn, and that some of its lines have no business on the canvas at all. No publisher ever robbed, no publisher ever succoured them. They were never open to that

sort of robbery nor stood in need of that sort of succour. No anonymous enemy ever stabbed them; no prosperous pitying brother artist ever had need to beg of them an unnecessary helping hand, and to pay ready money for the work accomplished. They never tramped hopeless Fleet Street empty in purse and stomach, nor held absurd high jinks with their last thirty shillings. When they speak of literary London they have no vision of a marble-topped counter set out with decanters and glasses, or of an upper room in a stuffy old public-house in the Strand. Their literary world is as respectable as a church, and as dull as a rainy bank holiday.

Mr. Maddox was of the adventurous turn, and met with many adventures. He loved books with all his soul, and had an unaffected passion for pictures and music and the drama. He haunted the theatres and the drinking bars where actors met, and he scraped acquaintance with Clancarty and Dexter, and Harford and MacGuffog, who all liked the lad more or less, and fancied that good things would come out of him. The boy himself was enthusiastically delighted at the opportunity of rubbing shoulders with these eminent people. He did not measure them by himself, as Mr. Amelia did, but was simply and solely charmed by his own good fortune in being allowed to look at them and talk to them. By nature he was freehanded and confiding, and it was scarcely to be hoped that a young man with these qualities would be spared by the lean and ever-hungry harpies who help to people Bohemia just as they help to people other places.

He had not meant to deceive Mr. Amelia when he had spoken of the money which had fallen to him, and had yet done so, for the small man looked on him as being settled beyond the need of labour, though Maddox saw well enough that in a year or two he must do something for his bread, and only chose to take a holiday and look about him before settling down. His new-made friends nominated him for one or two clubs, literary and theatrical, and he began to see intimately into at least a part of the artistic life of London. The Saturday house dinner at the Cannibals or the Footlights was, to his mind, a feast for the gods—not because the table was spread with any great luxury, but because he met at these entertainments actors and artists, and men of letters whose names had been familiar as household words to him all his life long—the great Montgomery Bassett, king of heavy tragedy; and the greater Ronald Marsh, author of a dozen poetical comedies; and painters and flautists and

fiddlers and journalists out of number—all the jolliest fellows in the world and full of amiability.

He had taken chambers in one of the Inns of Court, and from his sitting-room would arise sounds of melody or revelry at the wildest hours, for he began to be cunning in the purchase of whiskies, and his natural aptitude for the concoction of seductive and potent drinks grew into a real power by force of practice, and these are faculties which lead to the easy formation of friendships. Students of medicine and unfledged barristers assisted at these symposia, and sometimes the whole wild crowd would go out in the grey hours of morning and spin tops along the Strand, and be good-humouredly cautioned by members of the Metropolitan Police Force, who after all were human, and could be persuaded to sip milk and whisky from a travelling flask in sheltered byways.

In spite of all this there would be days and days of hard study at the Museum Library or elsewhere, and long nights of hard writing at the play or the poem or the critical essay which happened to be upon the anvil at the moment, for Maddox gave himself to various pursuits and loved them all. Now and then he would encounter Mr. Amelia, who would listen with lofty scorn to the story of his revels. Mr. Amelia had never revelled in his life, and had no sympathy with revellers. A man's business in this world, according to Mr. Amelia, was to Get On, and to get on immediately. It was not his moral sense which spoke against the mirth and madness of the younger man's career (though it is more than likely that he thought it was), but that curious love of Respectability which with some men excuses the absence of all things that are kindly and generous. We do not teach our youth this lesson—it might be unwholesome if they learned it too early—but it is not altogether a bad thing to have one field sown with wild oats. Sow no henbane, glad youth, no wicked nightshade, or mandrake which shall be only rooted up with groans as of the parting spirit. Live honestly, and if thou hast follies let them be such as thou canst laugh as well as sigh over in later years. Rejoice in thy youth —but—remember!

It always came naturally to Mr. Amelia to feel important, and, as a London journalist, he would take airs with his late junior, and would advise him as to the path to success.

"There is a style about a London man's work," says the little man, "which you never see in the provinces. You have to

work in London before you get it. I hope you are doing something."

"I heard a lecture of Tyndall's last night," said Maddox with half a blush, and an air of uneasy waggery. "He was showing us, among other things, how a surface might be prepared to absorb light in the daytime and give it off at night. To find that prepared object soaking in the sunlight wouldn't convey any very distinct idea of industry, would it?"

"Ah!" said Mr. Amelia, as if he pecked at this simile with a vocal hatchet, "and when do you expect your night-time of luminosity to arrive?"

"It'll have to be pretty dark before I begin to glimmer, eh?" said Maddox with a grin. "Well, it isn't all *otium sine dignitate* even with me. I really am at work in a way. I go about a good deal and see people, and talk and watch and listen and try to learn. Books are not everything. They are a good preparation for the study of the world, and they tell you what to look for and how to understand things when you see 'em. They are a sort of alphabet, but the world itself is your real library."

"You have read books a good deal?" said Mr. Amelia with a little pang of envy. "What have you read?"

"All sorts," said Maddox; "except Theology and the Exact Sciences and Jurisprudence, and that kind of rot. Poetry, History, Fiction, Drama, Travel, Criticism,—they're the works I like."

"There's no royal way to a knowledge of English literature, I suppose?" said the little man, looking keenly across at his companion. "No short cut?"

"Not that I know of," answered Maddox.

"Suppose, for instance," said Mr. Amelia, "that a busy man wanted a condensation of English poetry—a sort of Liebig's extract. There ought to be books of selections, where one could find a bird's-eye view of the whole thing. Which would be the best to go to?"

The youngster answered that, for wide reading and fine judgment, there was nothing known to him which would equal Leigh Hunt's *Fancy and Imagination*, and that work, said he, was crowded with the nobler and more delicate beauties of English poetry.

Mr. Amelia's note-book came out of his pocket *instanter*, and he made a note of the title and the author's name.

"Leigh?" he said, in his own crisp fashion. "Leigh, how do you spell the name? Never heard of the man before."

"By Jove!" said Maddox, staring at him.

When he and Mr. Amelia quarrelled, as they did later on, the junior used to take a malicious pleasure in tracing the deep and curious knowledge of English poetry with which the little man became somewhat suddenly credited to this one volume, and it was indeed fine to see how briskly Mr. Amelia would go a hundred miles about to get a humorous twist out of a line from Milton, or Massinger, or Beaumont and Fletcher, or Sir Thomas Browne, or any other of the obscure people with whom he first made acquaintance in that rare and curious work. But of course, as any journalist knows, that is a perfectly fair game—and if a writer were allowed to quote only from the books he had actually read, what would become of the literary learning which sparkles in so many of the reviews, and in so many leaders in the newspapers?

This talk was held in that old resort in which Mr. Amelia had first looked upon Mr. O'Hanlon and had laid the foundations of his London fortune on the body of the useless Barney. Each of the young men was provided with a chop and a tankard, and one or two potatoes which had burst their jackets in excess of mealiness, and whilst they chatted and ate Harford dropped in and took a seat at their table. Now Harford, though he would bombard an enemy in conversation—and surely he could never have had a real enemy in his life—was the very pink of courtesy and kindness to such as were younger and smaller than himself, and no more dreamed of taking airs with these young men than he dreamed of poisoning them. He sat down and talked with such geniality and kindness, that the junior's heart was moved to think of it, and in his own blunder-headed manner he expressed his feelings.

"They talk about the Republic of Letters," he began, "and, by Jove! that's just what it is—a true Republic. You're a graduate of Oxford, and a man of an old family, and you've held a commission in her Majesty's service, and my father was a greengrocer and sold cabbages. And for all that here we are together as if we were social equals, just because you're a captain and I'm a private in the great army of letters."

At this clumsy declaration Harford smiled, but an hour later when they were alone again Mr. Amelia took the junior to task about it.

"That," he said, "is a confession I would not make to any man in the world."

"Well," answered Maddox, "I suppose it was a lefthanded sort of thing to do."

"What is it to him if your father was a greengrocer? Why do you thrust a fact like that at anybody?"

"Oh!" cried the junior, "I'm not ashamed of the greengrocer? But it was a bit of an insult to Harford too, because it looked as if I should have expected him to value such a difference—just as a fool might value it."

The two young men were very wide apart, and could scarcely be expected at any moment to reach to a complete understanding of each other. But they met and went on meeting, and by-and-by Mr. Amelia began to notice a curious change in the junior. He met him one day in Fleet Street, and noticed that he was by no means so spruce as he had been, but had fallen back into something very like the aspect of the old Gallowbay days. His clothes were old and his boots were unblacked. What linen there was visible about him was disreputably yellow. He was just as cheerful as ever, and there was no change in his manner.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Mr. Amelia with a certain smart disdain.

"Nothing much," said the junior. "Come and have a drink? I've just cashed a cheque from Clancarty, and I can afford to pay for a liquor."

"Spend a penny on a shoeblack," said Mr. Amelia. Maddox stared at him for a moment and then looked at his own boots and laughed. "You talked about having had a fortune left you some time ago," added Mr. Amelia. "Have you managed to get through it?"

"Yes," said Maddox, with a comic moue. "It's gone—most of it. It's a punishment for having mixed motives, I suppose. Do you know Whawler? No? Nice man, Whawler was. Polished Christian gentleman. He's gone to America now, I believe. He has most of my money with him, wherever he is."

"Who was he?" asked Mr. Amelia, with less sympathy than contempt. "What was he?"

"Editor and proprietor of *The Hill of Sion*," replied Maddox. "An exemplary publication, I assure you. It was full of Whawler, and Whawler was the best man I ever knew."

"Well, how did *he* come to get hold of your money?"

"I used to meet him about at different places, the Museum and elsewhere, and we got to be a little bit chummy in a sort of a way, and one day he got me into his office and showed me his

books, and told me what a profit he was making, and how he was serving the Lord; and he got back to the subject later on, and being a born fool I put nearly all I had into a partnership. And now, sir, Whawler is not, and *The Hill of Sion* is not, and my fifteen hundred is not. At first it was a bit of a facer, but I've got two or three pounds left, and a lot of work done and some of it accepted. It'll do me no harm in the end. I shall have to work, that's all. I should have had to begin sooner or later, and perhaps it's better as it is."

"Ah!" said Mr. Amelia, "I suppose you'd be pretty glad of regular work, if that's how you stand?"

"I should," returned the junior. "That's just what I want."

"Perhaps I may be able to find you some a little later on," said Amelia. "Let me know if you change your address. Good morning."

He went with his bantam gait along the street.

"A fool and his money are soon parted," he said to himself complacently. "It happens conveniently, since it had to happen. If the young man is anything like what Clancarty thinks him, he will be an accession to the staff, and he won't cost much. But Clancarty," he added, with a passing touch of pity for human weakness, "is one of those fools who think well of everybody."

To make no mystery about these reflections—they arose from the fact that Mr. Amelia had himself made an advance in life. But to get the story clear we must go back a little at this point.

CHAPTER XVII.

When Mr. Amelia at the beginning of the parliamentary session took his place in the gallery of the House as chief of the staff of *The Constitution* the general sentiment was one of mingled indignation and surprise. Who was he, and what was he, and what had he done—all the seniors angrily demanded—that he should without trial and without experience be placed in a position so responsible? They waited with a grim satisfaction and a savage certainty in the realisation of their own desires to see Mr. Amelia break down. They thought, every

man of them, that Bannister, the manager of *The Constitution*, who had hitherto passed as one of the shrewdest men in his line in London, had taken leave of his senses, and the staff the little man had come to command was on the verge of a resignation *en masse*. Gallery men whose salaries would not have been reduced by such a step wondered why it was not taken, and expressed their wonder openly, and the gentlemen who had positions to lose or to keep grinned under the infliction, but somehow bore it. There was a touch of conservatism about the gallery in those days. At one time it had been a close corporation, to be entered with much difficulty and after a considerable outside probation, and the feeling was all in favour of the old days. Men told each other how Mr. Amelia had failed in his original enterprise in parliamentary reporting, and in the smoking-room, the refreshment-room, and Number Eighteen, they read his earlier summaries of the proceedings of the House and derided their flippant smartness and their occasional errors.

The little man had much to endure if he had only known it, but the true secret of his composure was his own admirable opinion of himself. Sometimes for a solitary second people would break through the fence of egotism, but his robust self-opinion shouldered them out again. He was not easily touched by any sort of contempt, envy, or anger.

"Sporran," cried one oldster to another across the refreshment-room, "you're not half the man you used to be, you haven't said a smart thing for a fortnight."

"Gad, sir," says Sporran, in answer, "I daren't open my mouth. If I make a joke, I'm bound to find its murdered remains in next day's *Constitution*."

There was a general laugh at this, but the laughter was not altogether good-humoured. It was true that all was fish that came to Mr. Amelia's net, and the Artful Dodger was no keener after a silk pocket-handkerchief than was the little man after a good saying. There was nothing he resented like a plagiarism when his own stores were plundered, but outside that one application of the rule he was opposed to copyright in ideas.

"The little wretch," said Sporran, "is a wet blanket and a kill-joy. I keep a guard upon my tongue with trembling, lest I should say something clever unawares. I have a perpetual nervous apprehension that I should drop a good thing in forgetfulness of that diminutive pirate. It isn't as if one could see him."

"The soize of him," said Mickey, "is the only charrum he has. If the man was as big as he's little, ye'd see him everywhere."

"Thank heaven for small mercies," said the other, and at that instant Mr. Amelia entered and took a seat at one of the tables.

The little man himself at least was sure of the wisdom of the choice which had so unexpectedly lifted him to a position of importance, and was persuaded not merely of manager Bannister's sanity, but of the profundity of his knowledge of human nature, and the keenness of his discernment. To think well of one's own powers is not the worst or weakest adjunct to success, and Mr. Amelia felt more than equal to his work. Outsiders did not ask if all the smart things in his column of daily summary were his own, and the more he plundered the cleverer he seemed. It began to occur to him by-and-by that the wit of the gallery men was wearing out, and he found himself cast more and more upon his own resources. To tell the truth these were quite equal to the call upon them, and Bannister assured himself that the journalistic lucky bag had yielded a prize. Mr. Amelia was indefatigably industrious, always at his post, alert, perceptive, keen. He was bent upon success, and he knew no better way to it than never to sacrifice a chance.

Now a position of authority in the gallery of the House of Commons affords opportunities the like of which are granted to few men of moderate social position. It is not necessary that a man in such a position should have been a gentleman to begin with, and as long as he has a tolerable manner nobody will be vexed with speculations as to his origin. His duties led him a good deal to the lobby of the House, and he grew gradually into intimacy with a good many more or less influential people. The very greatest he was not likely to meet, but the rank and file of the House were for the most part pleased to recognise him, and he came into intercourse with the humbler members of the ministry of the day. He had not been long in the gallery before members of the House began to know him. The current satirists before his time had generally confined their satires to the country journals, reserving all their droll stories and sayings for the weekly letter of Our London Correspondent. But Mr. Amelia bearded the lion in his den, and though he made enemies he secured admirers. The House of Commons loves to laugh, and any man who can tickle it is sure of liking. He began to find himself a *persona grata* with some, and since he had a perfect self-possession, and was apt at the acquisition

of tone and manner, he got on in his new circle with as much ease as he had done in the old ones.

It was not long before he began to discern new sources of power, and to draw upon them. He knew that it would serve him little to gild the refined gold of Disraeli — he found adulators enough already—to paint the Gladstonian lily would not merely have been a wasteful and ridiculous excess, but was forbidden by the politics of the journal in whose interests Mr. Amelia took his nightly seat in the gallery. But to single out some smaller man for praises might be a useful thing, and might lead to advantages until now unseen. It was necessary that the man should be small enough to feel the recognition of a London daily and be proud of it and grateful for it. Or, if it were not quite needful that he should be grateful, it was at least a *sine quâ non* that he should wish it to continue. There were two or three things to be considered in the choice to be made. The man must be small enough to be open to the sweet influences of public approval, and he must not be small enough to make the approval seem overstrained or venal. He must be a man to whom the notice of a metropolitan journal —the phrase is bad, but handy—would be valuable, and yet who in ordinary circumstances would be very unlikely to ensure it. He must not hold a social position so lofty as to be out of reach of this sort of flattery, and yet his social place must be considerably higher than Mr. Amelia's.

The little man cast about a long time and at length alighted upon one who combined all the characteristics he desired.

The Irish Party, though always eminently patriotic, had not reached to the red-hot devotion to Erin which has made it the admiration of the civilised world in these later days. Its ranks were led by the late Mr. Isaac Butt, a gentleman who had no taste for the dagger and the bowl. The distressful country was still distressful—heaven help her!—but her defenders were rather plaintive than wrathful, and more inclined to persuade than to threaten. In their ranks was Mr. Sylvanus Moriarty, a lean grey man with a lofty head and a sagacious face, a scholar and an orator, and a man who made his living, like Mr. Amelia himself, at the point of the pen. He had been called to the bar, but did not practise, being absorbed entirely in his political and literary work. At first Mr. Amelia was a good deal disposed to make a target of this gentleman. Certain outside peculiarities, as of manner and gesture, enlisted his peculiar sense of humour, but in a while he saw how much more useful

Mr. Sylvanus Moriarty might be in another way. The readers of the parliamentary summary in *The Constitution* began to learn that there was no one in the Irish Party so eloquent, none so scholarly, none so forcible, yet so sensible and moderate, as Moriarty. If I had the file of the journal before me I could cut out a half-hundred commendations of this gentleman's oratory, of his modesty, his good sense, his peculiar fitness to represent his country's needs. Manager Bannister grew weary of this partisanship in a while, and put his veto on its continued expression, but before this had come about Mr. Amelia and Mr. Moriarty were fast friends, and the little man had sat with his little legs beneath the mahogany at Moriarty's London chambers, and had met there many people whom it was useful to know.

Poor Kimberley had made his appearance in the House, and sat in an obscure place below the gangway and under the Peers' gallery, choosing the bench nearest the wall. He was a large landed proprietor now, and when honourable and right honourable gentlemen talked of the landed interests he felt full of enthusiasm at the thought that he was supporting some kind of banner and making one in a fight for some sort of cause. At the bottom of his heart he was better disposed to the poor than he had ever been whilst he was one of them, but he was enlisted to check the tide of the democracy. It was all a little vague—perhaps it is all a little vague to a good many honourable gentlemen—but he was used to seeing things in a nebulous form, and in a while he would grow so resolved at times under the influence of the oratory of gentlemen who represented the landed interest, that he would sing out "Hear, hear!" with boldness when the cry was very loud and general and he could be sure that his voice could not be heard above the others.

People liked him better than might have been expected. He was shy and of poor beginnings, and he was dolefully overdressed, but there was something about him which seemed to indicate a good heart. He trod on no man's corns, even by accident, and there was no representative of the people who was more amenable to the crack of the whip than he. Through what dreary hours would he sit, heroically awake, to keep a house, or to strengthen a division! Sometimes he would struggle against the sense of *ennui* (which, in spite of himself, would come with leaden force upon him), until the gathered energies of suppressed yawns became explosive, and he knew that he must gape or die.

He and Mr. Amelia frequently met in the lobby of the

House, and he always shook his little Gallowbay acquaintance by the hand, and asked shyly how he fared. Mr. Amelia rather patronised him, but Bolsover liked him none the less on that account. Mr. Amelia was a clever young man who wrote for the daily papers, and Bolsover knew himself to be a dull man who could do nothing in particular. Those little outside traits in the detection and description of which Mr. Amelia was so successful (after sedulous practice, without which how little real excellence there is in the world), offered themselves plentifully in the person of Bolsover Kimberley, and the satirist had a score of observations on him, and was prepared for quite a little cascade of brilliant improvisations in case he should ever do anything to bring himself into public notice.

Kimberley, of course, knew next to nothing about journalism, and when somebody put into his mind the idea that it would be a great thing to own a newspaper and lead the minds of the people he naturally thought of Mr. Amelia. A warier man, or a man more knowing, would probably have looked for an adviser of less limited experience, but to Kimberley's mind Mr. Amelia's position was as exalted as it well could be, and the people who sat about the little millionnaire were always chuckling at the summary in *The Constitution*, and declaring it the smartest thing that had ever been seen. The people on the other side naturally thought the summary dull, but then Kimberley had but little familiar conversation with them.

It came to pass thus, on a Wednesday afternoon, when Mr. Amelia had next to nothing to do, that Kimberley, finding him in the lobby, timidly buttonholed him, and led him to the tea room, then altogether deserted, and laid bare his mind with respect to the new project.

"I want to ask your advice, Mr. Amelia," he began, "about a thing that I've been thinking of." Mr. Amelia, with his bolt upright hair raying from his forehead, and his keen eyes taking complete possession of the millionnaire, answered by a jerky little nod of assent, and crossed his legs. "I have been thinking," said Kimberley, "of starting a newspaper—a weekly newspaper."

"Oh!" said Mr. Amelia. "On what lines?"

"Eh! oh, yes. What lines?" said Kimberley. "Of course. To be sure. On what lines." He was a little discomfited, not because he was altogether unprepared, but out of native shyness.

"Constitutional, I suppose," said Mr. Amelia. "But literary? Social? Artistic?"

"Yes," said Kimberley, "I should like it to be literary and artistic. I should like all the cleverest men to write for it."

Mr. Amelia nodded, and setting one elbow on his knee, fell to studying, his chin between his forefinger and thumb.

"I am very glad," he said, after a moment of pre-occupation, "that you have mentioned this matter to me, Mr. Kimberley, because I have had a scheme in my mind for some time past, and have only delayed putting it into execution for want of capital. I have exclusive sources of information, which I am naturally anxious to use to the best advantage, and I am inclined to think they would make the fortune of any newspaper which possessed them. The politics of the journal would be a matter of complete indifference."

"Oh, dear, no," cried Kimberley.

"Not to you, of course, Mr. Kimberley," said the little man with a crackle in his voice, "or to me, but to the success of the paper. Whig or Tory might apply the information I speak of with equal success."

"I did not quite understand you at first," said Kimberley, much relieved. "I couldn't sacrifice my political convictions." He blushed almost as painfully at the mention of his political convictions as he would have done at the thought of Lady Ella. It seemed such a presumption to have political convictions, or to lay claim to their ownership. But the Church, and the Land, and the Poor were all to be taken the best possible care of, and the Throne must be upheld.

"Precisely," said Mr. Amelia. "Have you thought of details?"

"Not yet," said Bolsover. "I shall want advice."

"There are many things to be considered. Size, price, day of issue, and the title. The title is all important. Shall I think it over and prepare a scheme for your approval?"

"Oh, thank you," said Kimberley; "I should be very much obliged. Will you come and have a glass of wine?"

Mr. Amelia declined the glass of wine, but set himself to consider ways and means with respect to the embryonic journal. This idea of Kimberley's offered him a chance he had hardly dared to dream of as yet. If he could get the conduct of a London weekly into his own hands what might it not be possible to do? There would be no want of money with Kimberley at the back of the venture. A weekly journal? not a common penny weekly on the common penny weekly lines, but a journal with some pretensions, a journal in whose columns

that sparkling fount which flowed from Mr. Webling might have free current: a fashionable journal, a journal cynical and bright and bitter; a journal which should eclipse the *Scourge* itself. In the first flush of the triumph of this idea he saw himself writing the whole issue, week by week, at special prices for each article. He knew that he was young and only half tried, but he had never a doubt of his own capacities, and scarcely ever thought that he was fortunate. In point of fact, if an angel with a turn for politics had appeared upon the floor of the House and had said, "Disthrone Disraeli," and had indicated that gentleman's successor in the gallery, in the third box from the right hand side, he would have experienced no surprise apart from the shock his scepticism in regard to supernatural apparitions might receive. He would have found himself ousting the Royal George from the command of the British Forces with no astonishment. There are some men Fortune cannot abash by any gift she may send them, and whose modest merit can claim all conceivable good luck as a right. Perhaps there is no other happiness in the world which equals the happiness which may spring from this condition of the mind. To be sure beyond cavil that there is no good thing you do not deserve! Surely, a happy state!

"I have taken the trouble," said Amelia, when he and Bolsover next met, "to get estimates from the paper merchant and the printer, and to prepare a complete table of probable expenditure and receipts. I should advise the issue of a sixpenny weekly journal, with something of the general aspect of the *Scourge*—you know the *Scourge*, Mr. Kimberley?—devoted to Politics, Literature, Society, the Drama, and the Fine Arts. I should like to know what you think of the title. As I told you this day week, the title is all important. What do you think of this?"

Mr. Amelia drew from his breast pocket a folded sheet of stiff and tinted paper, and briskly opening it displayed to Kimberley a specimen front page of an imaginary journal, at the head of which, in bold and open letters, stood the title "The Way of the World."

"Admirable!" said Kimberley; "admirable!"

It was not in the least the sort of journal he had intended to found, but he liked the idea better than his own. He would promote the interest of the Drama, and Literature, and the Fine Arts, and he got a real thrill out of the fancy. Surely it was something to set in motion a machine like this, which for all he

knew, might bring about a new era in the history of things in general. The poor millionnaire's heart was open to these foolish hopes and generous influences. "The Way of the World" was not the thing he had meant, but who was he to stand in the way of such an enterprise? Mr. Amelia's figures had already convinced him, and Mr. Amelia's arguments in favour of the new venture carried him off his legs.

"Shall I set to work at once?" asked Mr. Amelia, thinking it safest to assume the head of affairs without delay. "I must have a competent staff."

"Oh, yes. Please set to work at once," said Kimberley. "Will you take a glass of wine?"

Mr. Amelia accepted the proffered glass this time, and they drank together "Prosperity to the 'Way of the World.'"

CHAPTER XVIII.

Jack Clare, with his hands rammed deep into the pockets of his dressing-gown, and his legs stretched out in an attitude of forlorn abandonment, sat in an arm-chair in his own quarters, gloomily smoking. Between his outstretched feet lay a copy of the *Scourge*, a copy much dog's-eared and crumpled, and a week out of date. The young man had just read in its columns, for the five hundredth time perhaps, a paragraph announcing that a marriage had been arranged between Bolsover Kimberley, Esq., M.P., and Lady Ella Santerre, eldest daughter of the Earl of Windgall. "The friends of the happy pair," said the paragraphist (for the *Scourge* was nothing if not biting), "will be puzzled to decide on whom they should bestow their best congratulations—the lady or the gentleman."

Jack was unshaven and haggard, and his heart was full of loathing of the world. He had known all along the purpose for which that gilded little snob had been invited to Shouldershott Castle, and now the whole world knew it. It was natural he should think that the world took almost as keen an interest in the affair as he did, and he fancied Ella's name in everybody's mouth, coupled with a thousand flouts and sneers. And of course, since Ella had found it in her nature to do this thing, there was an end for ever and evermore of any chance for faith

in woman. He had always thought of her as he might have thought of an angel, if he had had the fortune to know one. She had inspired him with a sort of wondering awe, and he had praised God in his heart for so much goodness and beauty, even though they could never be his own. And after all she could sell herself for money. This profanation of herself was hideous to the lover's mind, and there were moments when it drove him almost mad to think of it.

To have been in love rapturously, devotedly, and blindly, actually to have worshipped, is a necessary part of a good man's training. Clare was not a young man who cared greatly to pry into the workings of his own spiritual organs, but he knew how much the thought of her had taught him, and what a change she had made in him. She had lifted him and purified him, and had seemed to him so ineffably good as well as beautiful, that to find her worthy of contempt was simply and merely horrible. To love her and to be condemned to live apart from her had been bitter, but he had endured and had schooled himself to endure for a lifetime. He could still love her and worship her, and think of her as the incarnation of all goodness. But now she asked him and compelled him to despise her.

While he sat immersed in his own bitter fancies a knock came at the door.

"Come in," cried Jack, and Lord Montacute entered. Clare supposed him to be his servant and made no motion. My lord regarded him for half a minute, and then advancing laid his hand upon his shoulder.

"How are you, Jack?"

"Oh, it's you," said Jack, stretching out his hand, and rising from his arm-chair. "What brings you over here?"

"I wondered why you didn't answer my letter," said Montacute, surveying his brother with brotherly eyes, and a little disturbed at what he saw in him.

"Letter?" said Jack. "What letter?"

"This one," said Montacute, stretching forth his hand and taking one from the mantel-piece. "Why, you haven't opened it."

"Perhaps that's why I didn't answer it," said Jack with a curiously unnatural and mirthless laugh.

"Jack," said Montacute, placing himself directly in front of his brother, "what's the matter with you?"

"What's the matter with *you?*" returned Jack. "You look as if you had just returned from a funeral."

"I have," said his lordship gravely.

"Great heavens!" cried Clare in sudden terror. "Whose?" It came into his mind that he had not opened a letter for a week, and in that time any terrible thing might have happened.

"Poor old Lady Yealdham was buried this morning," said Montacute, "and I was asked to make a point of attending the funeral. So were you, and I wrote you pressing you to be there. The will was read after the funeral. To each of her nephews except yourself she leaves one thousand pounds. You take the rest: fifteen thousand in the three per cents. The land's entailed, of course, but if it had been hers to give you would have had it. You were always her favourite."

"I am sorry I wasn't there," said Jack, penitently. "She was a good creature."

"I'm sorry too," said Montacute. "It doesn't look respectful to her memory. Here's a pile of letters and none of them opened. It's five o'clock in the evening and you're not dressed nor even shaved. What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing," said Jack, doggedly. "What should be the matter with me?"

"Jack, old fellow," said his lordship, "you must make a better fight than this." Jack dropped back into his arm-chair, and sat in the position in which Montacute had discovered him. "You don't want to wear your heart upon your sleeve for daws to peck at." To this Jack returned no answer except by a grunt which might have expressed scorn of himself, his brother, or the world at large. "Is that last week's *Scourge*," asked my lord, first touching the journal as it lay upon the hearthrug with his foot, and then stooping to lift it. "Ah! I saw the announcement, and I don't suppose anybody was much surprised at it. It's only the way of the world after all."

"Ah!" said Jack grimly, "you're a philosopher with a philosophy which adapts itself to circumstances. A year and a half ago it wasn't such a very bad world, and now 'the way of the world' is a phrase which can measure anything."

"What can't be cured must be endured, Jack," said Montacute.

"And little pitchers have long ears, and a good horse is never of a bad colour, and a stitch in time saves nine. God bless your soul, Charley," said the sufferer, glowering at him from the arm-chair. "I know as many proverbs as you do, and they are all very apt at times. Any one of them will serve my turn just now as well as any other."

"It's devilish hard, Jack," said his lordship. "I know it is, but——"

"Look here, Charley," said Jack, balancing the poker in one hand, "I don't want to talk about it."

"All right," said Montacute. "But shake yourself up a bit. I won't say another word now. Get a week's leave, and come up to town with me; it'll do you good. I won't bother you, Jack," he added, in a tone made purposely commonplace. "You'll come, there's a good fellow. I'll go and speak to Heard about it. I saw your fellow leaning against the wall with his hands in his trousers pockets and looking as solemn as a crow. I'll send him up to pack while I go and talk to Heard. Eh?"

"Very well," said Jack, "I'll go. I have a bit of business to do in London, and I'll do it at once."

"Good," said his lordship, not knowing what he commended.

The preliminaries were easily arranged, and Montacute and Clare ran up to town together that evening by the eight o'clock express from Bryanstowe. At first Montacute tried to talk, but succeeded in drawing nothing but an occasional answering grunt from Jack, and gave it up. Town reached, Jack went almost immediately to bed. He was up and out betimes in the morning, for when Montacute descended to breakfast and asked for him he had already left the hotel. He was away nearly all day and returned late in the afternoon, still disposed to be extremely silent, but a trifle less gloomy in his manner than before. Next day the same thing occurred, and Montacute forbore to press him as to the manner in which he had spent his time. The third day of his stay in town was begun in the same fashion as the other two had been, but this time he came back earlier, and opened his lips of his own accord.

"I'm going out to New Zealand, Charley," he said, standing at the hotel window, and looking out upon the street.

"To New Zealand?" cried Montacute.

"Yes," returned Jack, quietly, without turning round, "to New Zealand. I've bought land there: four thousand acres. When it's all cleared and properly farmed and stocked, and all that—I don't know much about things yet, but I've got a practical fellow to go out with me—it'll be a very nice thing for one of your younger sons to drop into. You'll get married, you know, Charley, and the home acres can't maintain a crowd in lordly splendour."

"You abandon your career in the army?" cried Montacute.

"I sha'n't go back," his brother answered, still staring abstractedly into the street, where the rain was falling and the few passengers were hurrying to and fro under glistening umbrellas. "I've written to ask for an extension of leave, and told Heard what I mean to do, and I've seen my agents and put everything into proper form."

"I don't think you are well advised, Jack," said his lordship. "I don't like it—it is too precipitate."

"Oh, no," said Jack, turning half round. "It's not at all precipitate; I've been turning it over in my mind for a long time. It was the news that you brought me on Thursday that decided me."

"How about your mother?" said Montacute.

"Well," said Jack, stroking his moustache, with an action which looked a trifle too unconcerned; "she stood it pretty well when I had to go out to be shot at, and she won't mind this so much." His lip trembled, for he was very soft and sore at heart, but his voice was steady.

"You don't think about her like that," said Montacute, warmly; "why do you talk so?"

"Because," said Jack, "I have an elder brother who warned me not to wear my heart upon my sleeve." His voice began to tremble. "Don't say anything more just yet, Charley. I've acted for the best. I've seen what a curse the want of money can be to people in our position, and I think it is in my power to lift the curse off the heads of one family. Let me try to, anyhow. And the more I look at it the more I see that an idle aristocracy can't hope to prosper, or to keep its place in the estimation of the world. You're all right, you know, Charley; you're a legislator, and a landlord, and you earn your living pretty fairly."

"A soldier's not an idler," said Montacute.

"No," Jack assented. "But he's not a producer. When you want to weigh the value of two things you ask yourself which you could most safely or easily dispense with. If every soldier in the world turned agriculturist the world would only benefit by it; but, if all the agriculturists turned soldiers, there would be a little trouble to find breadstuffs. I beat my sword into a ploughshare and my spear into a reaping-hook, and, so far as a fellow like me can affect the world at all, the world's the better for it."

"Jack," said his lordship, with a manner of some perplexity, "if these radical and revolutionary ideas had had a natural growth in your mind I should have been surprised. But they

have been unnaturally forced. You confuse your personal experience with the facts of political economy."

"Political economy and personal experience," said Jack, "should always be kept apart. A system of political economy founded on personal experience would be sure to adapt itself to human needs in the long run, and the purpose of the gentleman who originated the lovable science would be brought to nought."

"And now," said my lord, "you *know* you're talking nonsense."

"Was I?" returned Clare. "I thought I was. I won't talk nonsense any more, Charley." He turned from the window and, taking one or two steps into the centre of the room, he faced his brother. "I am not going away on politico-economic grounds, Charley. I can't stay in England. I can't bear it. And the life's too idle for me. If there were only a chance of hearing boot and saddle in the field again, I'd stop. But there isn't, and I must find work somehow and somewhere. I don't want to be merely harmless. I want to be of some use in the world, as well as to bear the burden of my own life. There—that's enough. I'm not going to grumble. I've got no *right* to be jolly, any more than other people. You'll tell mother, won't you? And then I can go down and say 'Good-bye,' and spend a day or two with her."

"You used not to be headstrong," said his lordship mournfully. "Go down and see your mother, Jack, and talk the thing over with her, and see if she can't persuade you to stay."

"That's just what I want to avoid," said Jack. "It's all settled. The land's bought, and I've made arrangements to sell out, and engaged a practical man to go with me."

"The land can be sold again, and the arrangement reconsidered, and the man paid for his disappointment."

"None of those things will happen," said Jack, and Montacute saw there and then that he was unshakable, but in spite of that discovery could not at once forbear to urge him. When he had wasted all the arguments he could think of the intending emigrant offered him a last word. "Go down and break it to our mother, Charley. Don't write it, but let her know by word of mouth. And when you've told her I'll come down and see her. Only let her know that I'm quite unable to change my mind."

"Come down with me," returned Montacute. "She will be longing to see you from the moment she gets the news."

"If you think it best," said Jack, "I will go down with you."

It was settled so, and Montacute having no actual business in town, and Jack's being for the moment finished, they went back next day. The mother received the news with less surprise and tremor than might have been expected, and when Jack followed his brother she gave him her blessing and bade him God-speed, with the tears in her eyes to be sure, for she was a mother and was parting from a son she loved, but with a cheerful courage too. And somehow, as, when Jack sat beside her, she rose and placed her hands on his head and blessed him, it befell that the youngster dropped upon both knees and suddenly caught her hands in his and kissed them with not unmanly tears.

"I'm sorry to leave you," he said, with a catch in his voice. "But I can't help it, mother, I must go."

"Yes, you must go, dear," she answered with a tugging at her own heart. But she was a brave woman and a Christian, and she had suffered greatly already, and she knew all Jack's story. She spoke her next words with some fear, but she had thought about them and had resolved upon them. "You must go, but there is one thing you must not do, dear."

"What is that?" asked Jack, kissing her hands again and looking up at her. "Tell me, and I won't do it."

She drew gently at his hands and he arose to his feet and sat down beside her.

"You are very bitter against Ella," said her ladyship, "and you think you have wasted your love on a girl who has proved herself quite unworthy of it." Jack rose and began to walk about the room. "You are wise to go away, but you must not go away embittered by a thought like that, to grow into a cynic and a misanthrope. You are wise enough and strong enough to bear what I have to tell you? Ella will marry Mr. Kimberley because it is the only way to save her father from bankruptcy, but she will not marry him out of any vulgar love of money. It is a noble sacrifice, and not an ignoble one as you have fancied. I have seen her and spoken to her, and she has told me everything. You may think of her without bitterness."

"My best way," said Jack, with a great effort to speak calmly, "is not to think of her at all."

"That would be a poor way," said her ladyship, following him to lay a hand upon his shoulder. "It is not a light thing, dear, to have set all your affections on one thing, and I shall never have to think so poorly of you as to fancy that you forget it. You will be a better man for it. Grief is hard to bear, but

it has its uses. And you mustn't scorn a girl because she has done her duty. Think of her gently, dear, like a sister, or like a saint in heaven."

When her ladyship was a little moved there was always the faintest musical tone of Irish in her voice, and it trembled there now.

Jack shook his head doggedly.

"Don't talk about it, mother. It's harder than you think it is."

"It's no harder than I know it to be," said her ladyship, "for I have gone through it all. But there is such a thing as duty in the world, and I had to do mine, and you have to do yours, and Ella has to do hers. It breaks your hearts to begin with, but you can look back on your own suffering gladly."

"She won't break her heart," said Jack, not scornfully or angrily, but like one who is half dead with weariness.

"She has suffered more than you have," said his mother. "She loved you as much as you loved her, but she saw her duty and she took it."

"It isn't my idea of duty," Jack replied, speaking as wearily as before.

"No," said her ladyship. "You thought it her duty to be happy. She thought it her duty to save her father."

"It's easy for a heart," said Jack miserably, "to persuade itself that it doesn't care about a big estate and a house in town."

"I can read a girl's heart," her ladyship answered. "I am not holding out any foolish hopes to you. Any new hope would be quite desperate, and I would never have breathed a word of this before she was engaged to Mr. Kimberley." Lady Montacute was a Christian, but she was Lady Montacute, and had been taught her own way of looking at things by many tutors. There are truths in Debrett as well as in Holy Writ, and the sins of the fathers are nowhere visited upon the children more than when the fathers sin by making improvident marriages. "I tell it you now," she went on, "because I do not want to have you so unhappy as you would be if you went away with those bitter notions in your mind. Think of her as doing a harsh duty for duty's sake, and try to rule your own life, dear, by the same spirit. You may not be happy, but you will be better than happy."

If this conversation had never been held, this story would have had a different termination, and Clare's character and way

of thinking would certainly have taken a different turn. It happened that Messrs. Begg, Batter, and Bagg, had been solicitors to the late Lady Yealdham, as to most other people of consequence in the county, and it was to their offices that Jack had to betake himself when he went to make arrangements about the money which had nearly fallen into his hands. Our lives are always ready to swing into new grooves, and the slightest chance may make or mar a fortune. At the moment when Jack sauntered drearily down the street towards the offices of the lawyers, the Earl of Windgall was closeted with the senior partner, and his carriage stood in the street without. Clare knew it at a glance, but gave it no second glance till he reached the gate. Then he turned and his heart seemed to stand still, as his eyes met those of Lady Ella, who sate in the carriage awaiting her father's return. Her face spoke more to him than all the forces of reason and rhetoric combined could have told him in an hour.

He raised his hat, and but for a slight and scarcely perceptible motion of her hand towards him, would have passed by with that mere salute. But seeing that he advanced, hat in hand.

"I am glad to have seen you to say good-bye," he said, steadily, though his face was as pale as death. "I am going to New Zealand. I am afraid that I shall not be able to see you again before I go."

She took his extended hand and said,

"Good-bye. I hope you will be happy."

It was a hard fight for composure on both sides, but at that moment Windgall appeared. He saluted Clare coldly with a remark about the weather, and mounting, drove away.

"Was my mother right?" Jack asked himself. "God knows. Heaven help her. She looks unhappy. Why should I be glad to think that she is unhappy?"

CHAPTER XIX.

Now it is not to be supposed that a good girl like Alice Santerre, and a girl who was not only good by nature but blessed with wit and some faculty of penetration, could miss the fact that her sister was in sore trouble. Nor is it to be supposed that she failed to observe the remarkable change which

came over her father's manner towards his eldest daughter. Windgall had grown singularly tender in his treatment of Ella, and whilst he would watch her with a kind of pitying tenderness when she was unaware of him, would treat her with a surprising deference in conversation. This went on for a day or two, and puzzled the young lady a great deal.

"There is something the matter," she said to herself, "and I am not to know. Very well, I shall not pry into any secrets they may please to have from me. Perhaps they may see fit by-and-by to take me into their confidence. You are only a child as yet, my dear," she concluded, with demure serenity.

The motives of the most charming young ladies are as mixed as those of other people, and love and pity and curiosity alike moved her, and amongst them operated so strongly that she forgot her pride.

It was October, but the season had been mild, and as yet no high winds had arisen to strip the trees of their hectic splendours. Ella and Alice were walking in the park together. The air was still, and the sun was shining with unusual warmth and geniality for the time of year. The turf was dry and springy, and the two girls left the pathway and took their road across the grass. They were a pretty sight, and made a pretty contrast to each other. The grief the elder carried had paled her cheek, but the resolution with which she had set herself to the task gave her a new decision and majesty. Her beautiful face was at once gentler and loftier in expression than it had been, the lips were growing into a look of habitual resolve, but the eyes were infinitely soft and sweet. There are faces which are made beautiful by trouble because of the nobility of heart which models them, and there are some faces, beautiful to begin with, which under the influence of sorrow grow almost angelic.

Alice was of smaller stature than her sister, and her hair and eyes were not black as Ella's were, but brown. There was a spice of mockery and satire in her face which gave it piquancy, but this expression was not pronounced enough to obscure the genuine goodness of heart which shone revealed there.

"What a sad time autumn is!" said the younger girl, as their feet rustled through the dead leaves which lay at the foot of an enormous elm. "Look!" A leaf came fluttering slowly downwards, and she caught it in her little gloved hand. "This is quite green and strong. I can see no flaw in it. It isn't only the sere and yellow leaves that fall. This leaf is quite robust

and young-looking. I wonder if it thought it had a long lease of life to come."

"Do you think autumn sad?" asked Ella. "It is only a prophecy of spring."

"When I was quite a little creature," said Alice, "ever so small, I saw one red leaf hanging on a tree with green buds all round it. It was April, and that wretched red leaf had hung there through all the winter, so that it might sneer at the springtime and show all the green buds what they were bound to come to. I felt, Ella, as if I hated it, and I tried to climb the tree to pull it down. Miss Wilton caught me, and was dreadfully angry. What a dear delightful cross old thing she was, and how she loved a title. 'Will you kindly remember,' she said in that frosty way of hers, 'that you are a lady, and will you kindly try to bear in mind that your father is an Earl.' Not even a smile, Ella, for that remembrance?"

"Pray forgive me, dear," said Ella, looking round at her, "for being so absent-minded. What was the remembrance?"

She smiled now, but the smile, though sweet, was so mournful that Alice impetuously caught her hand and brought her footsteps to a halt.

"Ella," she said, "what makes you so changed? What makes you so absent-minded? What makes you so—so dejected? No, dejected is not the word, but you make me want to take you up and nurse you, if it were not that I could pinch you for being so secret about it. What is it, dear?"

"Perhaps," said Ella, "I am a little more thoughtful and serious than I used to be."

"No, no," said Alice, with affectionate impatience. "It isn't that. I haven't been able to look at you for these past three days without wanting to kiss you and put my arms round your neck and say, 'You poor dear, tell me your troubles and let me comfort you.' Only," she continued, with a sudden air of pique, "you chose to be so reserved and unsisterly that my pride wouldn't allow me to do anything of the sort."

"Alice," said Ella, with a little show of authority, "you must dismiss this nonsense from your mind. I am not going to have any secrets from you. I asked you to walk this afternoon in order to tell you something. I am going to be married."

It cost a little effort to make this confession at the moment. It never could have been easy since the marriage was so plainly

a sale on the one hand and a purchase on the other, and since she was so sure to be unhappy in it. Now that Alice had charged her with being in trouble, it was harder than ever. But it was her way to be courageous, and since her sister suspected the existence of a grief in her mind, and since she herself desired above all things to disarm that suspicion, the best and safest way seemed to be at once to handle the misery itself as if it were altogether foreign to the theme Alice had chosen and could have no possible connection with it.

"To be married," cried Alice. "Oh, Ella, does papa know of it?"

"My dear," answered Ella with a smile, "when did you imbibe such dreadful fancies? Of course he knows of it."

"Who is it?" asked Alice, putting an arm through Ella's and walking slowly in a confidential attitude.

"It is Mr. Kimberley," said Ella simply.

Alice withdrew her arm, and stopping short in her walk, clasped her hands together with an expression of amazement, almost of horror.

"Ella!" The gesture and the tone were unmistakable. "Oh," cried the girl, wringing her gloved hands together, "this was my fault. But how could I know—how could I guess—that he was speaking of you?"

This was certainly a discouraging reception for a pious fraud to meet with.

"Your fault," said Ella, speaking as steadily as she could.

"My fault," answered Alice half-distractedly. "Yes, it was my fault. He spoke to me one night upon the lawn, and told me that when he was poor he had had the audacity to fall in love with a lady, and that since he had come into his fortune he had seen her and met her often, and was very unhappy. And I advised him to go straight to the lady, whoever she might be, and speak out what was in his mind."

"It was a very happy thing, dear, that you did so," and upon this Alice ceased to wring her hands, and, falling upon her sister began to caress her and to kiss her in a manner almost hysterical.

"This is for papa's sake," she said. "You have done it all for his sake, because he has been poor and in debt."

Well, it would scarcely be honest to deny this, and she could scarcely hope that the denial would be believed.

"It was my duty to make a good marriage for his sake if I could," said Ella. "Mr. Kimberley has already placed ninety

thousand pounds in his hands, and now papa has not a debt in the world."

"Oh, this wretched money!" cried Alice. "Ella, you ought not to have thrown yourself away on a man like that."

"He is not a bad man," Ella answered, feeling herself enforced to make the best of things. "And you have told me many times how refined and gentle a heart he has."

Alice responded with a kind of quiet desperation which would, in contrast with her words, have been altogether comic but that the matter was so serious to them both.

"Well, he loves you; you will have anything you like to ask him for."

It was no comfort to Ella to think that Kimberley loved her. If he had not loved her and had not asked her to marry him, she could have liked him well enough. And now the harmless little man was a crawling horror to her. When he kissed her hand she had curdled at him. Circumstance, when she gave Kimberley money, had certainly dealt hard measure to two people.

"He has improved very much" said Alice, trying to undo the effect of her reception of Ella's news. "When we knew him first he was very awkward and shy, and seemed to be unused to everything. He has really improved, quite wonderfully."

Kimberley's improvement was a matter on which Ella might or might not congratulate herself personally, but it could not be an agreeable subject of conversation for her. The whole theme bristled with thorns. To touch any part of it was to be wounded, and yet it had been impossible to ignore it.

The girls extended their walk somewhat beyond the common limits, and at their return found Kimberley at the Castle. Alice, at least, had been used to receive him gaily, and she alone among all the people he had met in his new sphere had seemed able to put him completely at his ease. The presence of Ella had always intoxicated him, and that not with happiness, but with a terrible compound feeling of awe and rapturous misery which evades analysis or description. He was always going to be blessed in her presence, his heart would flutter and his head would ache at the mere thought of the bliss of meeting her and breathing the same air with her, and then the very intensity of his worship would shrivel his hopes to nothing and he would sit silent, burning and freezing with shames, simple and compound, probably the unhappiest little man in Great

Britain. All the experience he had in this respect went for nothing. He would count the hours which separated him from her society with just the same burning impatience when next they parted, and when next they met would sit in the same impotent silence of bashful misery. At these times Alice had been of use to him; and if it had been impossible to set him altogether at his ease, had alleviated his sufferings and brought them within the bounds of endurance. And now, to his terror and dismay, he found that his ally had deserted him. He discerned this at a glance, and indeed might be said almost to feel it at the moment she entered the room. A cold and mutilated salute was all she gave him, though perhaps if she had known the cruel sinking at the heart which followed her reception of him she would have pitied him.

When the earthen pipkin essayed to sail down stream with the pipkins of metal, one touch was enough to break and sink it, and the unequally matched companions parted company for ever. But when the Kimberley pipkin found itself in this exalted company it encountered a misfortune infinitely less sufferable, because it happened to be woven of the most sensible heart-fibres, and was liable to the most painful bruises on the slightest contact.

Fortunately for Kimberley and his self-possession, the musical thunder of the gong rolled through the house at this moment, and the hour afforded for dressing came as a welcome relief. Eager as he was to face his fiancée, he lingered until the last minute before he forced himself to descend the stairs. The dinner was very silent and uneventful, and he was glad, as the others were, when it was over. Windgall was scarcely less keenly sensitive to Alice's altered demeanour than Kimberley himself, and he determined at the earliest opportunity to take her to task about it. An appeal to her generosity and affection was not likely to be unsuccessful.

"Kimberley," said the Earl, when each of them had settled down with his coffee and cigar. "About those papers! Believe me, I appreciate the delicacy with which they were offered, and the motives which dictated their collection. But I want to ask you now what I am to do with them."

"You had better throw them into the fire, my lord," said Kimberley, blushing all over, "and say no more about them."

"I don't see my way to that," said Windgall, laying down his cigar and bending impressively towards his guest. "So far as human foresight goes there is not likely to be any breach of

the engagement upon which we have entered." Kimberly began to pant a little in his breathing, and the palms of his hands were wet with nervous perspiration, but the Earl's next words relieved him. "We are all mortal, Kimberley. Heaven forbid it! but you might die. Nobody knows what is to happen. Ella herself might not live."

"Don't!" cried Kimberley. "Pray don't talk of such things."

"My dear Kimberley," returned Windgall, "they have to be spoken of. Ninety thousand pounds is a very serious sum of money, and if—if—. I see no fear of it, I am glad to say, but —if the engagement for any reason at present unforeseen were not fulfilled I could not retain it."

"My lord," said Kimberley, "I shall be very much obliged indeed if you will allow that matter to be entirely forgotten. I shall be immensely relieved. I shall, upon my honour."

It was natural that in a matter of so much importance to himself his lordship should be anxious that there should be no ambiguity.

"It would be absurd enough in me to pretend any disguise to you," he said, with a laugh which he did his best to make genial. "I suppose I am the poorest peer in England. But even to a poor man there are certain sentiments which are more valuable than money. From a relative I can accept this gift. From a friend I scarcely feel that I can take it. The papers would make a noble bonfire for the wedding day I must admit."

"Then let them make a bonfire for the wedding day," cried Kimberley, to whom this suggestion seemed of happy omen. "But in any case, my lord, I have washed my hands of them. They are not mine, but yours. In any case, my lord, they would have been destroyed. If things hadn't happened as they have, and if you had given them to me back again, I should have gone away and burned them. Apart from—apart from Lady Ella, my lord, you have been very kind to me, and I am sure that I couldn't have spent the money so as to get so much pleasure out of it any other way."

Windgall stretched out his hand and the little millionnaire accepted it.

"By gad!" said his lordship to himself, "I might have found a worse son-in-law, even if he were as poor as I am. A noble-hearted little fellow."

He qualified the reflection a moment later, and remembered that if Kimberley had been poor he would have had as much chance of marrying Ella as of being elected to the British

throne; but after all, generosity is a virtue, and he was in a position to appreciate it.

"Very well then, Kimberley," he said aloud, "I'll keep the papers, and we'll burn them in secret on the wedding day."

The conversation turned to other topics, but Kimberley was obviously distrait, and Windgall, taking the hint his manner offered, led the way to the drawing-room, where Ella and Alice sat in listless silence. And here again the old play was played, and Kimberley had plunged out of the frying-pan of expectation into the fire of realisation. He sat in wretched constraint or dropped monosyllabic answers to Windgall's forced speeches, until the Earl, by the merest motion of his eyebrows, and an almost imperceptible backward motion of the head, invited Alice to his side, and then with an admirable air of accident led her to the far end of the room, where he signed her to the piano. Alice burned within, but it was impossible to disobey just then. She meditated rebellion, and was determined that if she could in any way save Ella from this unhappy marriage she would do it. But this was not the time for a display, and she sat with her back to the engaged pair and set her fingers on the keys, whilst Windgall sat down at a table at a distance, and became surprisingly absorbed in the examination of the Liber Studiorum of Turner.

The music—Alice was playing a valse which breathed, like so many compositions of its tribe, a spirit of voluptuous mournfulness—stirred Kimberley curiously, and the presence of the woman he loved so dearly awoke him for once to a timid courage. Scarcely knowing what he did he rose and took his stand near her, and the fingers of both hands closed desperately on the light rail of a gilded chair.

"Lady Ella," he said, and his own voice startled him so much that for a moment he was choked and could say no more. She looked up, and her dark eyes seemed fathomless. He had never dared to be so alone with her before, and there was a sort of terror of his own temerity upon him. But suddenly—for he was a man after all, though a little one—his passion and his happy fortune seemed to lift him out of himself, and he triumphed over his fears. "Lady Ella," he began again, "I have never had a chance till now to thank you for the honour you have done me. I can scarcely believe that I am not in a dream."

"Oh!" thought Ella, "if I could only wake from mine!" But Kimberley was not to know this, and he went on.

"I'm not worthy to know you. I know that. But you have overlooked all that, and I haven't any right to remind you of it. And I shall only live for one thing, and that will be to make you happy."

Ella was silent, and Alice at this moment turned her head and saw Kimberley leaning towards her sister like a lover. With a crash that startled all her audience she plunged clean from the slow voluptuous cadence of the unfinished valse into some firework imitation of a battle. She was a brilliant player at any time, but now her fingers were strung until they felt like steel, and two of her listeners wondered at her. She set her little white teeth, and stormed the piano as if it were a fortress.

"Brava!" cried the Earl as she struck the last chord, and her hands dropped limp and listless in her lap. "Magnificently played, my dear!"

She scarcely heard him, but she set her white teeth again, and clenched her hands as she arose.

"She shall never marry *that* man," she said to herself, "if anything I can do can hinder it."

CHAPTER XX.

If Mr. Amelia's detractors either were, or pretended to be, surprised at his rapid advancement in the world of journalism, the little bantam of a man himself neither felt nor affected any amazement. He was superior to the pretence of modesty. When he had left his native town for Gallowbay he had already half matured certain opinions concerning himself, and the world had done little which had not tended to confirm them. He met with courage the people who disliked him, and he assumed that nothing but envy of his achievements and jealousy of his mental powers inspired the distaste which was obvious in so many people. This belief was of incalculable service to him, for dislike became flattery, and the more people derided and avoided him the surer he felt of his own intellectual dominion. A comfortable, and in some respects an enviable, state of mind.

The preparations for the production of *The Way of the World* went on with great briskness, and the little man scattered paragraphs with a lavish hand. Some of these fell upon

stony ground, but others sprang up and bare fruit. Mr. Amelia had not yet arrived at such an eminence that it was worth other people's while to trumpet his achievements, and pending his arrival at that height he did his own trumpeting without any great reluctance. All these sparkling paragraphs were from his own pen.

"*The Way of the World*, a new sixpenny society weekly, which is announced shortly to appear, will be conducted by Mr. William Amelia, a gentleman whose rapid ascent in the ranks of London journalism has been the theme of much adverse and friendly comment."

"Mr. William Amelia, whose brilliant daily gossip in the columns of *The Constitutional* has done so much to revolutionise the style of parliamentary summary in the London journals, has consented to accept the editorship of the new society weekly, *The Way of the World*."

"The announcement that Mr. William Amelia has surrendered the command of the gallery staff of *The Constitutional* in order to assume the editorship of the new society weekly, *The Way of the World*, is altogether without foundation."

The fact that no such announcement had been made did not prevent the publication of this paragraph.

What good, Mr. Amelia asked himself, was to be got by pretending to be modest? Who, having a candle, would set it under a bushel? Mr. Amelia's candle was not the brightest in the world perhaps, but he set it as high as he could reach, and surrounded it with so many reflectors in the way of newspaper paragraphs that it glittered amazingly, and the people at a distance began to think that he must be a person of remarkable capacities and of lofty standing. Now all this and much more which was yet to come would have been lost by modesty, and with his experience to back him he felt justified in despising that poor quality, whose one possible merit was that it might keep a rival in the background.

Sylvester was inveigled from *The Scourge* to illustrate the new journal, and a number of the best known people in London letters were asked to contribute to the earlier numbers.

It fell upon a day that Mr. Amelia, bustling along the Strand in his well-saved tweed and well-brushed hat, came full upon Maddox. The junior was lounging along with an empty pipe between his finger and thumb, and the new-fledged editor saw that his attire was seedy and his whole aspect dejected and forlorn. It had never been a custom with him to recognise

people who had fallen away from respectability, but he hailed Maddox with a genial-seeming briskness and took him by the arm.

"Come this way," he said, "I want to speak to you."

He was not anxious to be seen in companionship with this shabby figure, and still holding on to Maddox's arm he dived down one of the streets which lead to the embankment.

"What's the matter?" asked the junior, bending a pale face over him.

"Clancarty tells me," began Mr. Amelia, "that you can write decent verse if you like to try. I want you to try. I am editing a new journal, a high class journal, and I can't put up with rubbish. There's plenty of money behind the new venture, and I could engage a man who has a lofty reputation already if I liked, but I'm willing to do you a good turn if you'll let me."

"I'm glad to meet somebody who is willing to do me a good turn," said the poor junior with humble gratefulness. "I'm badly enough in want of a good turn, God knows. I'll do my best. When do you want the copy?"

"On Friday next," returned Mr. Amelia, "and every Friday afterwards if the work is satisfactory." He made a movement as if to turn away, but checked himself.

"By the way," he said, "let me give you a word of advice. You may not find it wise or useful to confess to everybody that you are in need of a good turn. I don't think you'll find that it will increase your prices."

"I mightn't say it to everybody," answered Maddox, "but it makes no difference with an old friend like you. And by George, if you knew all, Amelia, you'd see that I have reason to be glad and grateful."

"There must be no failure about the copy," said Mr. Amelia. "We print on Tuesday, and it has to be illustrated."

"What length?" asked the engaged poet, somewhat drearily.

"Oh," said Mr. Amelia, "say a column. Twelve verses—four lines each. Good morning. I'm in a bit of a hurry. You'll find me at the office at midday on Friday."

The junior being left alone took his thoughtful way into the Strand, and crossed it with bent head and hands folded behind him.

"A weekly poem," he said to himself. "I sha'n't take a house in Westbourne Terrace on the strength of it, but I suppose it'll pay for the daily loaf. How confoundedly leaden and sick it does make one feel to be hungry. I wonder if anybody would care for an essay On the Physical and Mental

Effects of Hunger. By an Unaccustomed Experimentalist. Ghastly sensation it is, to be sure! Let me see—this is Wednesday. I had something to eat on Sunday, and I'm safe for a meal on Friday if Amelia's pleased with the stuff I take to him. I suppose a well-nourished man wouldn't die of hunger in less than a fortnight."

"Hallo, me choild," said a friendly voice, and a friendly hand was laid upon his shoulder. "Whither away?"

"How do you do, O'Hanlon?" asked the pale junior, looking up and putting out his hand.

"Come and drink," said the Irishman.

"No, thank you," answered Maddox. "I mustn't drink just now."

"Mustn't drink?" cried O'Hanlon. "The planet's revolving on its axis in the customary manner. I've one or two *contes drolatiques* for ye, warm from the cow. Come and drink while I tell ye them."

"Well," said Maddox, "the fact is, I've got work to do, and so far, I haven't fed to-day, and——"

The good Irishman glanced at him keenly, and saw the blush on his face.

"Come and lunch with me, then," said he. "I was just going to eat when I saw ye. I'm in funds to-day, and I was wondering who I'd ask to luncheon. Come along."

With a half-ashamed suspicion that O'Hanlon understood his case, Maddox allowed himself to be dragged into a restaurant near at hand, and in a little while found a juicy steak, floury potatoes, and a pint cup of bitter beer before him. By dint of eating with extreme slowness he managed to consume this admirable meal whilst Jack told his stories, which perhaps would scarcely bear retelling in these pages. When Mr. O'Hanlon's humour took a fictional turn, it wore something of a Rabelaisian tinge.

"Ye said ye had work to do," he said by-and-by, when the remnants of the repast were cleared away. "Is it urgent?"

"Not very urgent in point of time," said Maddox, "but I want to do it well, because I am promised a regular engagement if the first thing is successful."

"Can ye spare a couple of hours to earn a couple of guineas?" the Irishman demanded. "I'm that pressed, I don't know what to do with meself. If the spiritual authorities," he added inwardly, "are at all disposed to be angry at *that* for a lie, it's the only way I can see to be good to the lad, and I can't help it."

"Oh, yes," said Maddox, nothing doubting the genuineness of this statement. "To tell you the truth, I shall be uncommonly glad of the chance."

Now that he was going to have money again, he did not so much care about its being known that he had been without it.

"'Tis a leadin' orticle," said O'Hanlon, "I dew for a country paper wonce a week. Not political, but social. They take a joke very kindly, and if ye have one in stock, now's your time for it. Where'll ye wroite? Ye can go to me own room at the office."

Maddox assenting, away went he and the good Samaritan together, and the youngster, being in high feather at this surprising change of fortune, chose his theme, harnessed his Pegasus to it, and drove him along in the most brilliant manner.

Mr. O'Hanlon meanwhile sought an interview with the cashier.

"Bill," said he, "I'm wanting a couple of guineas."

"Y'always were," replied the cashier, who was a fellow-townsman of Mr. O'Hanlon's. "What's it for? No dissipation, now. Honour bright?"

"I'll tell ye the solemn truth, Bill," said O'Hanlon. "'Tis a poor wretch of a creditor, that's had the money owing to him till I haven't the face to look'm in the oye. He's that hard up, 'tis a pity."

"Is it me ye choose to tell a tale loike that tew?" responded the cashier.

"'Tis Gospel truth," declared O'Hanlon. "D'ye think I couldn't invent a better lie than that if I wanted to desave you?"

"There's something in that," said his fellow-townsman, "but maybe 'tis your artfulness that makes you bring such a simple invention."

But he took Mr. O'Hanlon's I O U for the money none the less, and that gentleman, without even a pretence at any conscientious qualm, handed over the coin to Maddox on the conclusion of the article. He commended the junior's work highly, and overwhelmed him with thanks for having so admirably tided him over so busy a time.

"I'll have a row with the missis," he said, with his eyes twinkling, "when she finds I'm two guineas short on Friday. But I'll make it up to her somehow, and the lad's a good lad, and a clever, and he'll get on, and maybe he won't turn his back on a man that liked him, like some of the rest of 'em."

As for the junior, he went his way refreshed and cheered. His landlady lay in wait for him in a shabby house in a shabby street off Great Portland Street, but he feared her not. He could pay her claim for a fortnight's rent, and could still count thirty-five shillings of his own money—not a great sum, but enough to mean new hope. With a heart all tender and a brain all sparkling, the lad sat down in his garret and fastened on to his verses tooth and nail, and wrote and polished, and re-wrote and re-polished, by the feeble gleam of his rushlight. He was not going to be a great poet—a great poet is a kind of fish which is not caught in the net of every century—but he had read a prodigious deal of fine poetry, and had practised and imitated with hot zeal for years, and he had by nature a warm temperament and an eager fancy, so that his verse was likely to be more than tolerable.

Mr. Amelia had no great taste in verse, and no great knowledge of its requirements, but the junior's work looked all right to his mind, and he paid his guinea for it and had it put into type. When it came into Sylvester's hands for illustration the artist enjoyed it greatly and spoke of it with pleased warmth to his new chief.

"Do you think it good enough for ——?" Mr. Amelia mentioned the name of a well-known writer of verse.

"If this is his," said Sylvester, "he's improving. I never saw anything of his until now that I cared for."

Mr. Amelia congratulated himself upon his own fortune and judgment, and kept Maddox on the staff of *The Way of the World* as poet. The editor of the new venture was really coming to be a person of distinction, and the prophecy of his own hopes had been fulfilled with a rapidity which was simply amazing. He made no change from his earlier habits, but lived in a singularly plain and economical manner, so that he began to look at the record of his bank-book with complacency. If he bled Kimberley pretty liberally—as he did—Kimberley could stand it, and everybody knows that a society journal is likely to be an expensive toy—just at first. When it had had time to become popular Kimberley would no doubt reap the advantages accruing from his present outlay; and even if that happy time should never come about—why, Kimberley could stand it still.

Bearing in mind the proverb which says that he who wants a thing well done must do it himself, Mr. Amelia in a short time began to write the greater part of the journal. He had not, for the first time in his life, grown modest, and yet he concealed

this fact from the proprietor. At first sight the concealment may appear strange, but the little man never did anything without a reason, and in this case his reason was unusually solid. He drew, to begin with, a fairly handsome salary as editor, for Kimberley was rich and liberal, and perhaps even a little foolish with his money. Then he wrote a special political article for which he received special pay in consideration of the special information he could pick up about the lobby, or could cut out of the country letters of London Correspondents. He engaged, with Kimberley's approval, one Captain Pharr to supply special military information at special rates. He engaged one Vernon L'Estrange, at special rates, to supply special social articles—also with Kimberley's consent. He arranged with one or two other gentlemen for special articles at special prices, and the peculiar part of the business was that all these gentlemen sate in Mr. Amelia's chair, and wore Mr. Amelia's clothes to write in. By this ingenious device the journal not only gained in brilliance, but Mr. Amelia profited in pocket. Kimberley proposed at one time to give a dinner to the members of his staff, and left his editor to issue the invitations. One would not be displeased to think that the little schemer had a bad hour or two in view of that proposal. The dinner never took place. Mr. Amelia was Protean on paper, but he could not fill a battalion of chairs at the dinner table, and even the apparition of five special gentlemen rolled into one might have been somewhat startling to Kimberley's nerves.

"Some people," wrote a gentleman who is now leading a life of complete retirement, but who, at one time, made a considerable figure in the world's eye, "some people has brains and no money, and some people has money and no brains. Surely them that has money and no brains was made for them as has brains and no money." Great wits jump, and the editor of *The Way of the World* had by independent process arrived at the conclusion thus forcibly set down. The distribution of brains and money between Kimberley and Amelia was certainly unequal, and this is a world in which most things have a tendency to find a common level.

In this matter, as in the writing of the eventful letter to Major Heard, Mr. Amelia saw nothing but fair dealing. He was a man who could not have done a thing which he knew to be dishonourable. For people who were lax in respect to money matters he had a living and vivid scorn. Men who got into debt, men who squandered their incomes, men who gave away

money in charity, he regarded with a profound contempt. In his whole life he was never in debt beyond his means, and if ever he could have fallen into such case, he would have felt himself a criminal. There is no actual standard for honour as there is for the value of pounds and pence, and there are people in the world who would regard the device just chronicled as being a little shady and underhand. Mr. Amelia never thought it so, or he would never have put it into practice. A man may fairly be supposed to know himself better than anybody else can know him, and he knew that he was a man of the nicest honour.

The journal naturally boasted a cashier, and the cashier was naturally cognizant of Mr. Amelia's arrangements in this particular. He said nothing about the matter to his employer, but he talked it over with Sylvester, and the two used to express their opinions about the editor with some freedom.

"I say, Amelia," said Sylvester, one day, as he worked in the same room with his chief at an illustration for one of Maddox's poems, "you can't persuade me that this is ——'s any longer. A man doesn't change his style like this at his time of life."

Mr. Amelia sat at his desk in an arm-chair which revolved upon a central pivot, and with a touch of his foot he turned and surveyed his companion. It was his hour for luncheon, and he was taking his modest repast at that moment. His little legs dangled within six inches of the ground, and in one hand he held a medicine bottle, marked into eight divisions and filled with eight ounces of sherry and water, and in the other hand a sandwich. He took a measured dose of the liquid, and a measured bite at the sandwich, and twinkled at the artist.

"I never meant to take you in about it," he said. "It isn't —— at all."

"Who is it then?"

"Oh," returned the little man, with obvious self-approval, "I've got a ragged man of genius who does them cheap."

"Ah!" said Sylvester, regarding him with genuine admiration, "who is he?"

"A fellow named Maddox," answered Mr. Amelia. "Kyrle Maddox."

"Ah!" said Sylvester again. "He's a friend of mine. I'll tell him what you say."

CHAPTER XXI.

Alice Santerre was a charming girl, with a rarely good heart, and with social ideas which for a peer's daughter were rather democratic. She had as a matter of course been trained to believe that there was a wide gulf between the common people and the men and women of her own class. That was inevitable, and the belief that she had imbibed was (once more, as a matter of course) very largely true, though it had been a little over-emphasised in the teaching. The smaller social distinctions were out of her range of vision, and she saw only the two bodies in their broad aspect. Ella was actually representative and typical of one of these bodies—beautiful in person, noble in temperament. Kimberley, though not actually typical to her mind was yet sufficiently representative—not ill-mannered naturally, but ignorant of good manners, an oddity when translated from his own sphere into hers, though well enough in his own, no doubt. Alice had never disliked Kimberley, and had never despised him. She had liked him in a way, had pitied his shyness, and had known something of the tender goodness of his heart. But now, on a sudden, when he came to take away Ella, he became downright hateful and despicable. She could only couple them in her mind with an amazement of indignation and disdain. Kimberley had never cut a very noble figure in his life, but he had never been quite so ignoble in fact as he seemed now in her eyes.

The two girls slept in adjoining rooms, and an hour after Alice had come to her resolve she entered Ella's chamber and dismissed her maid.

"You will not be wanted to-night, Priscille."

Ella looked at her sister with a glance of appeal. An angry spot of red burned on either of the younger's cheeks, her eyes glittered, and her lips were resolutely set.

"Come into my room, Ella," she said, and Ella submissively followed her. She was tired and knew what was coming, and knew that it could only be as useless as it would be painful, but it had to be endured. Alice had already locked the door of the outer chamber behind the maid, and now, closing the door of her own room, drew the curtain across it, and faced her sister.

"What is it, dear?" asked Ella.

"Don't be hypocritical," returned the younger lady with great severity. "You know what I want to say."

"If I know it," Ella answered gently, "you need not say it."

"But I will say it," said Alice impetuously. "Ella, you shall not throw yourself away upon that man."

"You will make me very unhappy if you speak so," said Ella. "It is a most happy, a most fortunate thing for all of us."

"Ella!" said the girl with a world of grieved remonstrance in the tone, and more than a spice of anger.

"It is a most fortunate thing for all of us."

"For you?" fiercely and yet tenderly.

"Yes, dear, for me!" She had actually brought herself to think so. It was appointed to her to make this marriage and to live a loveless life with a man for whom she could have neither liking nor esteem. If the sacrifice had seemed less terrible she would have gone to it with more reluctance. But there was nothing to qualify martyrdom here, and she was a sacrifice for her father and for the honour of the house.

A cynical humorist might disport himself about this theme with much satisfaction, and there is occasion for a good deal of satire (though the theme is something musty) about a lady who is stepping from poverty to the martyrdom of wealth. Even the world which has ordained such marriages as this, has always been severe in its judgment upon them, and has always in its heart rebelled against them. And the world accused the Earl of Windgall's daughter of perfect heartlessness. She knew that well enough, and it was a part of the martyrdom she had accepted. There is a curious strain in women which makes them court suffering at times. There was no hysteria in Ella's case, and no weakness of sentimentalism. She simply accepted what seemed like an inevitable duty. In plain English, she was a woman of unusual nobility of character, and her religious sense had grown a trifle morbid by reason of the suffering she had already endured.

To a plain man's thinking no mere money pressure could justify such a sale as was here being made. Windgall was honestly ashamed of himself, and knew that he had reason to be. But to the woman's thinking everything was different. The shame itself became glorious when duty gilded it. The doctrine is of course more than a little dangerous. You may sell a little too much of yourself for the sake of another, even though that other be your father.

Alice was outside her sister's mind and could not altogether understand its workings. She knew enough, however, to know that Ella was bent upon self-sacrifice, and the whole of her own heart arose against it. She loved nobody so well as her sister, and she had never loved her so well as now.

"Ella," she said desperately, "you think you are going to do your duty, but you are not. Nothing in the world could make such a marriage a duty."

"You pain me, my dear," said Ella, "and you pain yourself."

"Ella," declared the younger, "you have told me over and over again that you could not think how people married for money or position, or anything but esteem and love."

Girls talk together on these themes, and Alice's charge was true enough. But then Ella's innocent views about marriage had been pronounced long ago, before she knew her father's necessities or had learned what hopes were centred upon herself. They were spoken indeed at a time when a romantic marriage between herself and a poor man of her own order had not seemed impossible to Ella's eyes. The mere remembrance of those old thoughts was a pain to her.

"I know many things now," she answered, "which I did not know then. You will understand them better by-and-by."

"I am not a child," said Alice, warmly. "I am seventeen, and you are only one-and-twenty." She advanced suddenly, and twined her arms about her sister's waist; "Ella, pray, pray don't submit to this. You can never be happy. You have no right to throw yourself away. I can't believe that papa is so wicked as to wish it, Ella! How mean and selfish you must think him."

In her first shame and terror at the proposed alliance Ella had fought against these harsh thoughts of her father and had vanquished them. She had conquered and was not going to let the beaten foes rally their forces and defeat her now.

"My dear," she said, not sorry for the opportunity of a diversion which this speech afforded, "you must not speak or think of papa in that manner. Papa never did a mean or unworthy thing in his life."

"I don't care," said the younger girl, almost with passion. "If he has persuaded you to this he has done a mean and wicked thing. He has done a thing I would not do if nothing else I could do could save me from going to work in a factory like the girls in Gallowbay, and from living in such houses as they live in. How dare you tell me, Ella," she flamed out,

carried on by the daring of her own words almost as much as by the fervour of her thoughts; "how dare you tell me that he has never done a mean or unworthy thing, when he can sell you to such a man as Mr. Kimberley? Ninety-thousand pounds! If I were a father I would not sell a child of mine to save myself from ninety-thousand lives of poverty, one dragged out after the other."

What with her grief and her anger, and the unaccustomed passion of her speech, she began to cry almost hysterically, whilst Ella comforted and soothed her. Her own heart was sore the while, and was likely to be sore. She had nothing to look forward to but duty, and look forward as she might she could awaken in it no willingness to travel along the dreary road which lay before her. She could find resignation, but it bade fair to be the resignation of a proud heart-break, and nothing gentler or more bearable.

"I am doing my duty, dear," she said, when Alice had half recovered, and had broken into renewed supplications. "You will know it by-and-by."

"You!" cried the younger. "You are an angel, but if papa allows you to go on I can never respect or love him any more."

"Hush, hush!" said Ella, with an air of severity; "you must not say or think such wicked things."

"They are not wicked," Alice protested, "and I don't care if they are. They are true. I don't care what papa's troubles about money are! A *man* would never sell his child to escape from them. I hate him for it; I hate him!"

"Alice," said Ella sternly, "I can listen no longer; I have listened too long. Go to your own room," she added, more gently, "and try to forget these wicked thoughts."

She approached to kiss her, but Alice, with unreasoning anger, put her away, and went to her own chamber, where she cried through half the night. Ella tried to find, and found in a while, some comfort in her prayers. The human heart can do anything with itself. This sordid match became a heaven-sent obligation, and Kimberley's presumptuous proposal became a providence. She resigned herself anew, but her heart asserted itself in her dreams, and she wandered with Jack Clare through the blessed realms of dreamland, and they two plighted their troth together there, and she told him of a dreadful dream which had looked so like truth that she had never doubted it, a dream in which she had been compelled to engage herself to a man she despised, but who had her father in his power. And

so, when she awoke in the morning the struggle had to be renewed, and the tears to be wept again, and the prayers to be prayed once more.

The very poverty of the Earl of Windgall had helped to draw his family the closer, though not with a bond of which any one of them had been conscious. But had he been wealthier those calm social dissipations which form so large a share of the life of the leisured and moneyed classes would have drawn them away from each other, and would have given them other interests than those of an elegant yet narrow domesticity. As it was they had all been beautifully united and close to each other, and an atmosphere of equable affection had always dwelt about them. It became clear to the hapless head of the household that with one of his children at least these halcyon days were over. Alice lived for a day or two in such open disdain of him, and showed for this brief space a spirit of so much rebellion, that, though he guessed the cause, he was compelled to take her to task.

She was sitting in the library, moodily turning over the leaves of a book, when his lordship entered. Seeing him she closed the book with unnecessary vehemence, and arose to leave the apartment. The Earl closed the door behind him.

"Take a seat," he said, calmly, though his heart was beginning to beat uncomfortably, "I have something to say to you."

Alice remained standing with her hands entwining behind her, and one small foot set a little before its fellow, beating tattoo upon the carpet.

"There is something in your manner of late, Alice," said Windgall, "of which I cannot approve, and—and—which I am at a loss to understand. I had noticed it before to-day, but I have forborne to speak until it became so direct and pronounced that I could forbear no longer. Understand, if you please, that there is a limit to my endurance, and that I cannot allow any child of mine to behave to me as you have done during the last day or two. I will not speak harshly to you, but I must ask you to allow what I have already said to be enough."

"What have I done, papa?" she asked, still tapping at the carpet.

"I will not enter into any description or discussion of your manner," said his lordship, coldly. "I have nothing to add to what I have said already, and I can only beg of you to allow it to have the effect that I desire."

"What have I done, papa?" she asked again.

"Done!" cried her father, whose nerves were by no means so much under control as they had used to be. "You have assumed airs towards me which are intolerable. Your manner towards me for three days past has been one of continual insult and disdain."

"I assure you," said the pretty rebel, looking up with pale face and flashing eyes, "that I have assumed no airs. But I am very young, and I am not so well practised as Ella in concealing what I think and feel."

Now this went through my lord like a rapier, and he winced at it, whilst his grey face turned a shade greyer.

"You forget yourself," he said, "and me. Do yourself the honour to remember that I am your father."

"I remember that," she answered with a tone of cruel disdain. The burden of poverty, the long-drawn fear of open bankruptcy, had never weighed upon her. She knew nothing of the shames he had suffered, or of the terrors which had hardened him. He recognised all that, but it made the open contempt of his own daughter none the easier to bear. He knew that he had acted shamefully. He knew that a stronger and nobler man than he would never have laid such a weight upon a daughter's heart as he had laid on Ella's. But that a man should despise himself makes it no easier for him to endure the knowledge that others despise him also.

To allow the matter to rest in its present position would not in the least have advanced the cause the girl had at heart. It cost her more than a mere tremor to stand thus in defiance before her own father. But she felt that she would be a coward beneath her own contempt if she did not speak out. The Earl was silent, and had moved to one of the book-shelves to conceal his anger and discomfiture.

"You said, papa," she began, "that you were at a loss to understand the change you notice in my manner."

"Alice," said her father, turning upon her with an agitated face and voice, "I will not pursue a conversation which you are disposed to carry on in such a tone."

"I cannot help it, papa," said the girl, and in spite of herself her voice began to break and her lip to tremble. "I have been trying to speak to you ever since I heard the dreadful news."

The last words broke from her with a sob, and she was crying outright when her father answered her.

"What is all this?" he cried, querulously, the air of dignity he had tried to wear dropping suddenly away from him. "What dreadful news?"

"The news," Alice answered, struggling with her sobs and looking at him disdainfully through her tears, "that Ella is to marry Mr. Kimberley. Oh, papa, how dare you force her to such a match?"

"I force her?" cried the wretched nobleman. "I have never forced her. I have not even persuaded her to it." He had had so much to urge upon Ella, and had really so little urged her, that he felt this to be true. "She has accepted Mr. Kimberley's proposal of her own free will, and is perfectly conscious of the advantages on both sides of the alliance. But you have no right even to think upon these matters."

"I *have* a right to think of them," she answered. "I will not stand by without a word and see Ella thrown away. I will not see her break her heart and say nothing."

He writhed inwardly with shame and anger, and in his inmost heart he knew that she was in the right. Had he been differently circumstanced he could even have admired her courage and her devotion to her sister.

"Once more," he said, turning round to the shelf and taking down a volume at haphazard, "I decline to continue this conversation."

He beat the book between his hands, and expelled his breath noisily in blowing away an imaginary cloud of dust, and then rapidly left the room and closed the door. In a second or two he was back again. She had sunk into a chair and had laid her head upon her hands, and leaned across the table in abandonment to her despair for Ella.

"These dissensions," he said, "are plain to the whole household, and their cause is not likely to remain unknown if they continue. Now, I have never been accustomed to make my private affairs the theme of servants' gossip, and I will not begin it now. Let me notice a different demeanour in you when I see you next."

She made no answer, and controlling himself from further speech he left her, but encountering a servant in the corridor, and recognising the likelihood of a discovery of Alice in her tears, he stopped short, and addressed the man.

"Worthing," he said, "I am in the library, and am not to be disturbed on any consideration for an hour."

"Very well, my lord," said the servant, and Windgall,

waiting until he had passed, opened the door again, and slid into the room suddenly, being fearful lest one of his daughter's sobs should be overheard.

"I have given orders that no one is to come here for an hour," he said, once more approaching her. "In that time I trust you will have composed yourself."

Then he sat beside the window at some distance from her and made an effort to read, and finding that impossible, stared wretchedly out at the park, and tried to console himself by the thought of the timber which Kimberley's opportune proposal had saved to him. In a little while Alice raised her head, wiped her eyes, and swept haughtily from the room. He had found his own inaction almost intolerable, and being released now from the necessity of its continuance, he began to pace up and down the room, whilst his thoughts scourged him.

"Great heaven," he broke out at last, "I am not a monster with a heart of marble. I haven't forced her. I have not compelled her inclinations in any way. She was always a sensible girl, and always disposed to look at things in a reasonable way. She liked that fellow Clare, now; I know she did. And yet I never heard a murmur from her when I warned him away, and told him that a match between them would be madness. I am sorry to see so much sentiment in Alice, though, with a wealthy married sister behind her, she may be better able to afford it. *I* can afford it better now, with all these confounded debts lifted from my shoulders. Upon my word, that little Kimberley's a very good fellow, and a very gentlemanly little fellow too by this time. Very passable indeed. That's blood, no doubt. He comes of a good stock on one side—the same stock as poor Edward, and there was no better gentleman in England than he would have made had he lived, poor boy. If the man had been a snob all through he could never have made such a leap into good manners. With a little more assurance he'd be very near the right thing, begad, he would. And if Ella's satisfied, what has Alice to lament about?"

His murmured words, as often happens when men commune with themselves, never for one instant came near his inmost thought. The cunningest self-deception is managed in soliloquy, because then the self-deceiver can be so sure that he wants to deceive nobody, to talk nobody over.

But my lord had to make a period to his own speech at this point, and to ask himself—was Ella satisfied? At the bottom

of his heart he knew better than to believe that flimsy lie. He saw the pallor of her lovely face, the languor of her movements, the hourly struggle to be cheerful under the burden his needs imposed upon her.

He was not at all an ogre, but a weakish man with a good heart, and he was sorely tried. When he next saw Ella alone the good heart so smote him that he must needs go up to her, and put an arm about her waist and kiss her.

"You are not unhappy, dear?" he said tremulously. "You don't regret——"

"No, dear," she answered with a tender smile. "Why should I be unhappy? Why should I regret?"

He salved his conscience pretty successfully with that reply, and Ella forced herself to be cordial with poor little Kimberley whenever he appeared.

But the millionnaire was unhappier than ever. The one creature who had ever made the house tolerable to him was Alice, and now she met him with a scrupulous politeness which made him feel chill to the marrow. Shouldershott Castle was a gorgeous iceberg to him, as it had always been, but the one sunbeam which had cheered him fell upon his solitude no longer.

CHAPTER XXII.

Kimberley was too much absorbed in affairs which more nearly concerned him to take any close interest in the progress of the new journal, and, except that he signed a monthly cheque to meet its expenses, had little indeed to do with it. Once a week it was laid on the table before him, and he got a kind of pride and satisfaction out of it, though it came natural to him to feel a sort of impertinent interference with the affairs of other people when he read the fashionable gossip. It seemed as if that impertinent interference were his own since he was the proprietor of the journal. Mr. Amelia doubtless knew best what such a publication should be, but if Kimberley had been less shy than he was *The Way of the World* would certainly have been a much less impudent affair, and its quest of gossip much less inquisitorial.

Mr. Amelia, in the double prosperity which now attended

upon him, took a house in a quiet bourgeois quarter of the town, and developed an unexpected habit of asking people to dinner. The people were always considerable. He was not the man to waste a dinner on a nobody, and the perfect crisp assurance of his "Come and dine with me," caught more important personages than one would have thought at all likely to sit at his table. But his plan had always been to get whatever was to be had by asking. The least little touch in the world of Kimberley's malady would have ruined him, but he was as free from nervousness as he was from modesty. Measuring everybody by himself, and profoundly convinced that few could rightfully claim equality with him, if any, he was serene in the presence of all men. No greatness abashed him. A great man (who was pretty generally over middle-age) had only seized and made good use of all his chances. Mr. Amelia was quite young, and all his chances had not yet arrived. When they came he was there to take them, and he recognised in himself the power to grow a little bigger than the biggest.

When a thing belonged to Mr. Amelia it had a value in his sight such as it could never have possessed if it had been the property of another. The story of his own brief career read to his own mind like a fairy tale, of which he was the living hero. So little a while ago, with all his powers and his capacities, he had looked to the eye of the world like a mere nobody, and now he was a figure in London journalism. There were plenty of men in positions parallel with his own, but he never thought so. A mere editor—a mere chief of staff in the House of Commons —was nobody compared with him. This of course is only another way of saying that his sympathies were limited to the affairs of Mr. Amelia.

This characteristic cropped out in the drollest little ways conceivable.

"Who's that?" asked Sylvester one day as the door of the editor's room closed on the dragoon-like figure of a young Scotchman who had just been loaded with a number of instructions by Amelia.

"That," said the little man, with an admirably casual air, "is my private secretary."

Sylvester whistled, and then laughed.

"I say, Amelia," said he, "what a prodigious swell you're getting to be, to be sure."

"He's a droll fellow," said Mr. Amelia, disregarding this

exclamation. "A very good fellow too, and very useful, but ridiculously touchy."

"He's a Scotchman," said Sylvester.

"Ah!" said Mr. Amelia, "I suppose that explains it. He's a graduate of Edinburgh University. He came last week, and on the first morning he was half-an-hour earlier than I had wanted him. I was at breakfast, and I told my servant to show him into the parlour, and to take up a kitchen chair for him to sit on. I never sit on the parlour chairs myself, of course, unless I have guests. I went up when I had finished breakfast, and the fellow had actually put the kitchen chair out on the landing, and there he was, lolling on a new satin-covered settee."

"What an awful cheek," said Sylvester, chuckling richly to himself.

"Wasn't it?" cried Amelia.

"Thought himself insulted, I dare say," said the artist, with a face enwreathed with smiles.

'Obviously," returned Mr. Amelia.

"I should be careful with him," said Sylvester, "if I were you. He's a big fellow, and next time, by George, if he has a temper like that he might pitch the chair over the banisters and send you after it. Awfully impolite fellow he must be. Quite a bear!"

"Oh, no!" Mr. Amelia responded unconsciously. "He isn't at all a bad-mannered fellow. But he's peppery—absurdly peppery, and a little inclined to be above his station."

"That's it," said the artist. "Some men only know modesty by name, and you meet people who haven't the remotest consideration for other men's feelings. Fancy putting that chair on the landing! It was almost an insult."

"It was certainly insolent," Mr. Amelia assented.

Meeting the private secretary that afternoon, Sylvester accosted him.

"Mr. Macfarlane, I believe?" The tall Scotchman bowed with a simple dignity. "My name's Sylvester, I do the drawings for the paper."

"I am proud to make your acquaintance, sir," said the other.

"Did you ever taste Scotch whisky?" asked Sylvester. The private secretary smiled. "There is a first-rate tap close at hand. Come and try it."

Over their liquor and a pipe, Sylvester, among whose other defects shyness had no place, related with great spirit, and with

a capital rendering of his chief's manner, the conversation of the morning.

"Ma word," said the secretary, with his eyes wide open with a smile of wonder, "the man had no more brains nor self-respect than to tell that!"

"He has brains enough," said Sylvester. "But there's a hole in him."

"There was very near being a hole in him," returned the other with considerable heat. "I'd the greatest mind in the world to hit him over the head with the chairr!"

"That would have been a pity," said Sylvester. "I wouldn't have him spoiled or broken for the world. He's as good as a contented mind to me—a continual feast."

The little man was prodigiously busy at this time in the completion of that well-known work entitled *Thumb-Nail Sketches in Parliament*, by the Member for Land's End. It was wonderfully clever in its way, and hit off the surface characteristics of people to a nicety. All the odd little peculiarities of honourable members were touched with a laboured dexterity which had an admirable air of impromptu. Who wore a white waistcoat, and who a red tie; who had a perpetual trick of losing his hat, and was to be met in the tea-room and the lobby in bewildered search after it; how people sat, how they walked, how they gesticulated, how this honourable gentleman's coat or trousers failed to fit him, and how bad a hat that honourable gentleman wore: all these trifles and this sort of trifle were set down in Mr. Amelia's book with a sprightly air of instantaneous mental photography, which many people found amusing. The tall collars of a certain eminent statesman were a joy for ever to him, and he seemed figuratively to skip whenever he beheld them. All the waistcoats and collars and ties had sparkled in the columns of the *Constitutional*, and now they were actually to shine permanently between the boards of a book.

Now the great Fergus Gowen, whose name is a household word wherever the English language is spoken, was a very tower of strength to the *Constitutional*, and Mr. Amelia had naturally met his distinguished fellow on many occasions and had always been treated very civilly. When the book came out it bore upon the page which followed the title this inscription, "To Fergus Gowen this book is dedicated by his friend and colleague the author."

"Confound his impudence!" said the great man when he

received his presentation copy and read the dedication. "When was the little beggar a friend of mine?"

But with the outside public the dedication had the weight which the cunning Amelia meant it to have. It was outside all likelihood that his eminent "friend and colleague" should repudiate the dedication. That, of course, was next door to the impossible. The incognito was carefully calculated to draw attention to the author's name. "The author of that sprightly series of parliamentary portraits which, under the title of *Thumb Nail Sketches*, has aroused so much amusement in political circles is Mr. William Amelia, the chief of the gallery staff of the *Constitutional*, and the editor of *The Way of the World*." The private secretary penned that paragraph at Mr. Amelia's dictation, and, having made a score of copies of it, sent it to a score of journals in his own name. One or two printed it, and the country journals copied it. In its own way the book is really very bright and clever, and when Mr. Amelia sat down to say so on paper he did himself no more than justice. He reviewed the volume in *The Way of the World* and spoke of it with high approval, as was perhaps natural. What was the good of having exclusive control over the destinies of a London weekly unless he chose to employ that control? This kind of thing is not general amongst press men, but see how slowly they rise to fame as a rule, how often they remain altogether unknown to the world. Here was the little Amelia going up like a rocket, half by chance, to be sure, but half because he knew how to announce himself. A fool might play Mr. Amelia's game in vain, but then he was really so clever! He was almost in measurable distance of being as clever as he thought he was —and that is not a thing to be said with truth of every man who imagines himself to be a smart fellow.

The knack he had of getting the best place everywhere was a thing remarkable in itself, and contributed greatly to that air of importance which now surrounded him. When the great Grecian, whom Mr. Amelia had once failed to follow in Mr. Pitman's system of shorthand, took the chair at a dinner given by the Cannibal Club, and there was a scramble for places, and the genial secretary was at his wits' end to please everybody, the little man secured a place right opposite the distinguished guest by one of the simplest expedients in the world.

"I want a good place," he wrote to the secretary, "because I have invited so and so to be my guest for the evening." He named a rising politician, and he got the place at once. The

prominent politician did not appear—perhaps Mr. Amelia had forgotten to invite him—and the little *ruseur* turned up with a country editor whom (for reasons of his own) he wanted to think well of him. There was something of a disturbance about this, but the country editor never heard of it, and Mr. Amelia got the London letter he fished for. To be seen, indeed, in so prominent a place upon an occasion so important was worth a small fortune to him, and left a delicious flavour on his own mental palate besides.

Such a man is *bound* to get on. There is no withholding him.

> "'Tis not in mortals to deserve success,
> But we'll do more, Sempronius, we'll command it."

Maddox and Sylvester had grown to be great cronies, and the junior was not pale or seedy any longer. Mr. Amelia found a good deal of work for him on *The Way of the World*, and so kept down the expenses of the paper. That little crowd of special writers at special prices, who were all so surprisingly like Mr. Amelia, made the journal a rather dear venture for Kimberley, and to get a ragged man of genius cheap was of course a happy stroke of fortune. Amelia was not so foolish as to tell Maddox that he was cheap, but, on the contrary, he made a special favour of the fact that he gave him work to do, and the youngster accepted his chief's estimate of the situation and was very grateful. Taking the chief all round he thought well of him, and for a long time he could not understand the general dislike of him, but had to set it down to his manner or to envy.

Nobody could ever tell precisely how the story of Mr. Amelia's reason for leaving Gallowbay got up to London. It was certain that Rider never told it, and indeed Rider was as far away from London for all practical purposes as if he had been at the North Pole. Major Heard had talked about the matter perhaps, for he hated Amelia, and had always disdained the little man's appeal for privacy. Anyhow, here the story was, and people who knew and disliked the man against whom it told related it with much unction.

"I praise the bridge that carries me over," said Maddox. "Amelia has been a good friend to me."

"My simple-minded infant," returned Sylvester, "he has been a very good friend to himself. I told him at the time that I should tell you what he said when he first mentioned your name to me. I asked him who was doing the poems, and he said that he'd found a ragged man of genius who did 'em cheap."

"That's very complimentary," said Maddox with a forced laugh. The thing wounded him more than he cared to show.

"You were with him in the country, weren't you? At Gallowbay?"

"Yes," said Maddox. He was thinking of the ragged man who did things cheap, and only half heard the question. He felt a something coarse and heartless in the phrase, a something greedy and unpitying.

"Of course you were," said Sylvester. "Now you can tell me, perhaps, if this is true? I don't want to believe a lie about him, and nobody has a good word for him."

He told the story of Mr. Amelia's attempt to supplant Rider.

"No," said Maddox, "I don't think that's true. A man who could do that would be base enough for anything. I shall find out, though. If it's true, he deserves that it should be known; but if it isn't, it oughtn't to be spoken of. I shall write to Rider, and ask him to deny it."

Poor Rider was reluctant to unbury this episode, but he answered the letter Maddox wrote to him. He was very sorry, he said, that the story had got abroad, but it was true. He had never breathed a word of it, even to his wife, and would never have told it, but, unhappily, it was true. This letter hurt the lad, for he had been grateful, and in spite of all would fain have been grateful still. Mr. Amelia had undoubtedly been a benefactor to him. He had given him work when he had actually been hungry and starving, and, if not actually ragged, on the way to rags. He had made a favour of it too, and the junior, though he thought well enough of himself to believe that his work was worth the money he got for it, had taken the employment as the gift of friendship. "A ragged man of genius who did things cheap." The phrase rankled in him.

"It wasn't that he thought me a genius," he said to himself, shrewdly enough, "but that he wanted to brag of his own dirty little cleverness. And, great heaven! that a man should think it worth while to boast that he took advantage of another man's needs in that way. I can fancy a dog mean enough to take the advantage, but to brag about it! One would think that a man would be ashamed to show that dirty spot in his heart."

No doubt the junior made something too much of this, but he was young, even for his years, and it and the Rider episode taken together made him very wroth against his benefactor, who wore all a benefactor's airs, and who began to feel a little surprised at his *protégé's* altered manner.

"It is an ungrateful world," mused Mr. Amelia. "I took the fellow in hand when he was starving." He took credit to himself for generosity in this matter, and he had really meant to be friendly in his own way. But his way of being friendly was to make some sort of profit out of friendship, to secure some social advantage or pecuniary gain, and the common way of being friendly tends in another direction, so that he was liable to misunderstand things, and to be himself misunderstood.

There was no actual open breach between them, but there was a coldness on both sides. Amelia never suspected the real reason of Maddox's change of manner, and, conceiving himself entitled to the young man's gratitude, was naturally affronted by it. But everybody about the office of *The Way of the World* was talking unrestrainedly at this time about the special gentlemen at special prices who all wore Mr. Amelia's clothes, and he was credited with more meannesses than were actually true of him. Maddox heard all these things, and was in the humour to believe them, so that day by day his ingratitude grew more marked and flagrant, and Mr. Amelia was more and more disappointed in him.

The fact has to be confessed that at this period of his career the junior was an absolute fool about money. He lent it, he borrowed it, he spent it, he gave it away, with equal freedom. He was always ready to share his last half-sovereign with a friend, and he borrowed with no shame or reluctance. In the long run he paid everybody, but he was always under water, and he owed money to Mr. Amelia, who had by no means so light an opinion of its value. A regular contributor to a journal *is* occasionally permitted to overdraw his account, and Maddox having this favour extended to him displayed no particular haste to square himself. Apart from this there were splendid materials for a quarrel, but this was the fusee which fired the mine.

One fine morning the junior received a letter in a strange handwriting, but bearing the familiar signature of his chief.

"My dear Maddox," ran the letter. "You are tolerably prosperous now, and you have mainly to thank me for the helping hand I gave you. I think it quite time that you repaid your debt to me, and I was astonished to hear that you had drawn your check yesterday at the office in full. I shall expect to receive at least a portion of the debt by return of post.

"Yours very truly,

"William Amelia."

This epistle had obviously been dictated to the private secre-

tary. Had it been written in the chief's own hand, the junior would have accepted the rebuke conveyed in it as being no more than his due, but the indignity of being addressed in this way through a third person was more than he could endure.

"My dear Amelia," he wrote back, in savage haste. "You shall have your money when I have it to send, but if ever you again venture to address me in such terms as I find in your letter of yesterday, and to employ a third person to put down those terms on paper, I will set my little brother at you. I can't assault a man of your inches with my own hands.

"KYRLE MADDOX."

There was probably no man in England more amazed that day than was Mr. Amelia when he received this letter. The black and insolent ingratitude of it literally staggered him. This, then, was the man he had assisted; of course, the indignation at being addressed through the private secretary was simply assumed. The pretence was too flaring to be believed in, even for a moment. Mr. Amelia was fated by nature to be frequently astonished. People took such amazing views of things! They called Major Heard a man of honour, and as for this astonishing ungrateful scoundrel of a Maddox, if there was one characteristic attributed to him by the general voice it was that he was impetuously warm-hearted. One *would* have expected gratitude from Maddox!

In short, Mr. Amelia's strength was also his weakness. That perfect self-opinion of his supported him through anything, but it left him unable to comprehend the sentiments with which other people regarded him. He knew in his inmost heart that he could do nothing mean, and yet people constantly pretended to think him mean. He forgot his satisfaction at the cheapness of his ragged man of genius, and he remembered only that the man had been in sore distress, and had confessed as much when first he had employed him. It was his hand which had succoured the drowning man, and if he had made the rescued person pay for rescue, why surely there was nothing harsh in that, or grasping, or unfair. The market-price of a thing is what it will fetch, and no man who did not maintain a respectable *entourage* could expect to get the best prices for his work. All this had been at the time so much a matter of fact to him, that he never thought of it now at all.

This was the beginning of the Amelia-Maddox warfare and

its earliest result was to plunge the junior back into poverty, for he was too wrathful to write another line for *The Way of the World*, either for Amelia's sake or his own. Mr. Amelia used to write at uncertain intervals and demand his money, and at last grew quite pathetic over it.

"I have actually," he said, "gone without a suit of spring clothing in consequence of your non-payment of your debt."

Maddox, who knew something of the little man's sources of income, grinned at this stroke of pathos with wrathful irony, but for all the despite and disdain he had come to feel for his sometime chief, he did actually owe him the money, and could do nothing less than pay him in some way or another. The only way he could see was to work out the debt, and Mr. Amelia consenting to this Maddox wrote an article or two and sent them in. They were printed, and at the rate of payment he had been accustomed to receive their value exceeded his debt by some thirty shillings. He had not a penny in the world apart from this, and he was awfully hungry.

When he went to draw his balance Mr. Amelia was absent, and the cashier tendered him his cheque.

"I can't take it," he said. "I owe Amelia the greater part of it."

"What for?" asked the cashier.

"Oh," said Maddox, "the overdraught I made months ago, when I was on the staff here."

"You don't owe that to Mr. Amelia," said the cashier. "It was entered as a bad debt, and was settled in Amelia's favour when Mr. Kimberley ceased to be connected with the paper. If you owe it to anybody you owe it to Mr. Kimberley."

"He can afford to wait for it better than I can," said Maddox. "You can tell Amelia that I've taken it, and you can tell him why." The cashier laughed, and handed the cheque across the table. "You mean to tell me," said the junior, "that he has been paid this sum already, whilst he has been writing to me for it, week by week?"

"That's the fact," said the cashier.

"Tell him I took the cheque," answered Maddox, "and never mind telling him why. I'll keep that little bit of information as a *bonne bouche* for him."

After this Mr. Amelia had a real right to despise Maddox, a right genuine and indisputable. For his part Maddox felt an equal right to despise Amelia, and the two were at daggers drawn for life.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Kimberley knew perfectly well that he ought to be happy, and was just as well persuaded that he was miserable. He had grown used to his money, and was no longer very greatly oppressed by it; he had grown used to the new people amongst whom he moved, and had found that they were really no more terrible than the people amongst whom his earlier lot had been cast. A stranger would always be a terror to him to the end of his days, but the stranger of wealth and position had come (with familiarity with his like) to be no worse than the stranger who was poor. He had got over the misery of being wealthy, and use had inured him to fine clothes and magnificent apartments, and his one unhappiness was that he was in love. His suit prospered, and he was an accepted lover, and there lay his one great burden.

He did not know it, but if Ella had refused him he would have been infinitely less unhappy.

There is no man so humble that he is incapable of being flattered, and sometimes even Kimberley could believe that Ella had accepted him from other sentiments than those inspired by his money. He had left her choice perfectly free and unfettered, and yet she had chosen him. It was inevitable that he should ask himself why, and should torment himself with all the different solutions the problem would take. First solution of all, that she loved him. There was nobody in the world to whom that could look more wildly impossible than it looked to Kimberley, and yet there were moments when he believed it, and was pretty nearly mad with the vertigo of the delight it brought him. Next, that she esteemed him; that she thought his conduct to her father generous, that she thought well of his whole character; a belief a little less delirious than the other, but almost as maddening in its effects whilst it lasted, and apt to be as quickly buried beneath the tumbling avalanche of shame which always killed these fancies. Next, that gratitude moved her; for he could guess pretty fairly, all things considered, what the fear of an open exposure of her father's poverty would have been to a heart so proud. Next, that she married for her sister's sake; and last, that she simply took him for his money. Now gratitude looked cold enough, and yet was the most bear-

able of them all. The wild and transient fancy that she loved him brought in its way a pain almost as intolerable as the suspicion, not to be repressed at times, that she had taken him merely for his money.

There are snobs enough in the world who could have accepted everything that had befallen Kimberley as their own natural due. It was because the unhappy little man was so truly a gentleman, whilst he thought himself a snob, that he suffered. Had our other small friend, Mr. Amelia, for example, fallen upon Kimberley's lines, how happy he could have been. Kimberley was an infidel to his own deservings, but an enthusiast as to other people's; Amelia an enthusiast concerning his own, and an infidel as to other people's. The snob looked in the glass, and saw a creature all admirable: the gentle-hearted and generous little creature, who always was and always would be a gentleman to his very bones, if he could only have known it, looked in the glass and saw a snob there. The philosopher who wrote, "man, know thyself," pointed out to humanity one of the two or three roads which lead to the impossible.

If Kimberley had been less agonised by his own shyness, he would have seen earlier what he was forced to see at last. But when in nine interviews out of ten he could scarcely speak a dozen consecutive words, and could hardly endure Ella's glance for a second, it was not to be wondered at that he remained blind so long. It dawned upon him at last that she was unhappy, and that he was the cause of her unhappiness.

When once this thought had occurred to him a very remarkable thing happened. He began to look upon her almost without shyness, and the downright terror of the fancy lent him something very like courage. It was not an easy thing to understand, and he had never pretended to be very brilliant. If the prospect of marriage made her thus unhappy, why had she accepted him? He had purposely left her free. Bit by bit he began to see things clearly. Windgall had said that he could take the papers from a relative, but could not take them from a friend. She was marrying him to save her father's pride after all.

He saw a good deal of Ella now, and when his eyes were opened he had opportunities enough for decision.

One day he had ridden up to the lodge, and had heard her voice in the crisp and silent air. She was speaking to old Hine the lodgekeeper, and her voice was clear and cheerful. The lodgekeeper's wife was suffering from some small malady, and

Ella had herself accompanied the servant who took fruit and wine from the Castle, and had with her own hands carried the gift into the invalid's room. The Santerres were poor, but they could afford to be kindly to their servants, and the Hines had belonged to the Castle for two, if not three, generations.

When Kimberley, with his heart beating as it always beat at her presence, or at any thought of her, caught sight of her face, she was nodding a smiling good-bye to the old man. She saw Kimberley, and the smile fled from her face with so swift a change, and left for a mere second something so like terror there, that he could scarcely fail to see and notice it. She recovered her self-possession in an instant, and when he bowed and dismounted and bowed again, she received him in her customary way. The customary way was never very flattering to a lover, but it was courteous, if icy, and Kimberley had generally been too confounded with his own emotions to be nice in his observations of her manner. But not the proudest and most beautiful of high-bred women can be a continual terror to even the humblest swain who sees her daily, and since Kimberley had begun to see ever so little, his eyes grew keener though his heart grew sorer.

"Good morning, sir," said the ancient Hine, touching his forehead. "Shall I lead the horse up, sir?"

"Thank you," said Kimberley, "I shall be very much obliged. You are going back to the Castle, Lady Ella?"

"Yes," she said, "I am going back."

"May I," said Kimberley, "may I—walk with you?"

"Certainly, if you wish," she answered kindly enough, but coldly too.

"I want to ask a favour from you, if I may," said Kimberley when they had walked a little distance. He was very cold at heart, and he trembled a little, as if the cold were physical.

"Yes?" she answered questioningly, turning a casual look upon him. "What is it?"

"I have been so unlucky somehow," said Kimberley, "as to offend your sister. Can you tell me how I have done it, and how I can make amends?"

His heart was icier than ever. He thought he knew the cause of Alice's altered demeanour, and he was sure that he was on dangerous ground.

"I think," she answered, doing her best to smile, "that Alice will be your safest guide in that matter." She knew as well as he how dangerous the ground was.

"She used to treat me with great kindness," Kimberley said, with a feeling as if his brain were turning round and round. "She is quite changed now."

"I am sorry to hear it," Ella answered. "Do you wish that I should speak to her?"

"Not to say that I complained of it," cried Kimberley, in a nervous agony which almost obscured his heartache. "I dare say you have noticed," he went on, in so much desperation that he scarce knew what he said, "that I am never very self-possessed. But I was always so much at ease with her, and we were such good friends until lately, and——"

"And you think you have offended her in some way?" Ella asked him.

"I am afraid so," said Kimberley.

"And you wish me to act as peacemaker?"

"If you will be so very very kind." It was certain that Alice disapproved of the match, and he tried to think that in that fact might possibly be found a reason for Ella's unhappiness. It was not easy for him, even now that his eyes were being opened, to confess all the truth to himself at once. Alice's disapproval would not account for the fact that his coming had that morning chased the rarely seen smile from Ella's eyes, and set in its place the transient look of fear which he had noted there. But lovers catch at straws a drowning man would scarcely seize upon.

For her part the question trembled upon Ella's lips, "Do you know the reason of this change?" But she herself knew the reason too well to dare to ask him.

"I will speak to Alice," she said, and for a little while they walked side by side in silence.

"I know very well," said poor Kimberley, after this pause, "that I haven't any claim to her consideration, but——"

"You have every claim to her consideration, Mr. Kimberley," answered Ella, with a tone of decision, and something, as he fancied, of disdain. Whatever else Kimberley might be, he was her affianced husband, and the girl had pride enough to rebel against the open scorn Alice had shown for him. The human heart is a complex thing indeed, and Ella's sacrifice begot a certain defiance in her against those who misunderstood her. And since Kimberley was to be her husband, she claimed some consideration for him, and rebelled against the estimate Alice chose to make of him, even though she herself had always been natively disposed to think less of him than Alice had been.

She was proud, and it galled her to be pitied. She was ready to be sacrificed, but by no means ready to have the world look on her as a sacrifice. The sweetest natures carry enough of gall within them to make some things bitter.

A stranger meeting Kimberley, in ignorance of his history, would have found a singularly shy and unassuming young man, fairly versed in public affairs, speaking in an accent somewhat precise and formal, like a schoolmaster's, and in phrases which were commonly studied before they were spoken; a little man whose breeding was remarkable neither in one way nor another, and about whom the one noticeable thing was that he was overdressed. Kimberley's experience and observations ought perhaps by this time to have taught him better, but in that one respect he had learnt nothing since he had come into his money, and the fancy had fluttered into his mind that he might dress himself like Ragshaw if he chose. So the shy man still bedizened himself like a beatified bagman, and was only saved from downright vulgarity by the talent of his tailor.

He had not been a millionnaire for the better part of two years for nothing, and Mr. Lochleven Cameron, and Mr. Amelia, and all the other tutors he had had about him, had not laboured in vain. Even the surprising work on Etiquette—its lessons being chastened and modified by experience and practice—had not been altogether useless to him, and Cobbett's Grammar and the little book on Vulgar Errors between them had worked a revolution in his speech. All these improvements, with a fortune of a million and a quarter to back them, had made a new man of him in outward seeming, and he was by no means what the Earl of Windgall would have called "impossible" any longer. He had good blood in his veins too, and taking him altogether, the most exclusive people he encountered were quite prepared to tolerate him. But to himself he was always the lawyer's clerk, and in the midst of his new surroundings, in spite of his acquired habits he felt like an impostor and usurper.

Alice's condemnation of his insolence was natural to his mind. The young lady herself had never held so lowly an opinion of him as that he cherished of himself.

"Alice," said Ella, half-an-hour after her brief talk with Kimberley, "I want to ask you to do me a great kindness. I think you love me a little, and would do something to please me."

"Yes," replied Alice, "I think I love you a little, and would do something to please you."

Ella disregarded the tone, which spoke pain and anger and reproach.

"I want you, dear," she said, "to show a little more consideration to Mr. Kimberley, for my sake." Alice looked at her with a quick flash of tears in her eyes, but as yet said nothing. "It can hardly be pleasant to me," Ella continued gently, "that my sister should show so open a scorn of the man who is to be my husband."

"I liked him well enough till then," answered Alice, speaking to the thought and not to the word. "But oh, Ella, that is not the man you should marry. You are throwing away all your happiness."

"My darling," said Ella beseechingly, "you must show a little more consideration for my sake. You forget that in humiliating him you humiliate me." That was almost the only plea she could make for Kimberley, and she knew it.

"I never meant that, Ella," Alice answered, with tears and caresses. "But I have been so angry, so distressed, so broken-hearted. For you, dear."

"You have distressed yourself needlessly," said Ella.

"Oh, no, no, no!"

"Indeed you have. I shall not be unhappy. Let me speak to you quite freely and honestly. If a woman were ever free to choose her own husband, Mr. Kimberley is not the man I should have chosen. But you do not know much of the world, and papa has never made you his confidante as he has made me. You do not know under what a miserable burden of debt he has lain. You do not know what wretched embarrassments he has had to face. You do not know even that if it had not been for Mr. Kimberley's generosity the very trees in the park would have been cut down and sold for timber this winter, and our poverty would have been proclaimed to the whole world. Let me tell you, dear, that you may understand everything, and may know how much bound we are to be thankful for the good fortune Mr. Kimberley brings us all. Papa was so pressed for money fifteen or sixteen months ago that he had actually to take my diamonds and borrow money upon them. It nearly broke his heart to do it, but there was no escape."

Alice had fallen to her knees, and her face was hidden in her sister's lap. She said nothing, but she seized Ella's hand and kissed it.

"If you will think of these things," pursued the elder, "you will begin to see that I cannot be unhappy in having the power

to banish all this misery. I have been his confidante ever since our mother died. I have seen clearly, ever since then, that his only hope was that his children should marry prosperously. You must not think me mercenary, dear."

"You? Mercenary? No, no!"

"I would not have allowed money to weigh with me for my own sake. I have been quite candid with you, now, and you must believe me when I say again that I shall not be unhappy." Alice, still holding her hand, kissed it again and again, and laid her hot cheek against its icy coldness.

Kimberley did not see Alice again that day, but when next they encountered, the girl held out her hand to him with something like the old frankness. She also, young as she was, had been taught something of the necessary worldly lesson. The millionnaire was no longer all ogre, but had a strain of the delivering angel in him.

Want of tact is pretty often synonymous with want of heart, but in Kimberley's case it was the product of pure nervousness.

"I was afraid," he said, being too much fluttered inwardly to be able to let well alone, "that I had offended you."

A man of the world would have spared the young lady the awkwardness of that speech.

"Young people of my age," she responded, "have a prescriptive right to be wayward, Mr. Kimberley." She saw that he was about to speak again and checked him for his sake and her own. "Shall we agree to say no more about it?" she asked, and Kimberley did not dare to disobey the injunction thus conveyed.

But when he had time to think about it afterwards, this reconciliation, which had come about by Ella's influence, helped to confirm him in that terrible belief which was growing clearer to him day by day. The woman he loved so truly, the woman for whose happiness he would have laid down his life in spite of being such a weakling, was being sold to him, and Alice, like the rest, was being persuaded to see the necessity of the sale. She had rebelled against it at first, and was now reconciled to it because it began to look like necessity. And though he had meant to leave Ella absolutely free and unhampered in her choice, he could see now that he had taken the surest means to bind her, through her father's poverty, and her daughterly affection.

As if film after film, gauze after gauze, were lifted, he saw the truth clearly and more clearly.

He was in his own house at Gallowbay at this time, and at the moment when his heavy heart first felt the full weight of this new truth, he was sitting in a room which had been upholstered by the last occupant of the mansion, and was almost completely walled with mirrors. It was rather in the French eating-house style of taste, to be sure, but Kimberley was not very learned about that kind of thing, and he had left the room as he had found it. He took now to walking up and down between the mirrored walls, and at last caught a conscious sight of his own reflection, and stood still to look at it. There was no doubt about it—his aspect was insignificant. The fine dressing-gown and the gorgeously-beaded slippers—he saw himself from head to foot—did nothing to help him, but rather to his own mind emphasised the natural disadvantages of his aspect. He stood and stared miserably at his own reflection. His hair was better trimmed and groomed than it had used to be, and his whiskers were less straggling, but the meek, feeble, shame-stricken face was what it always had been to his mind when he had thought about it. His shyness had never been of that self-conscious sort which touches so closely upon vanity, that the difference between them is hardly to be descried, but he had thought of himself a good deal, and always in a desponding mood. And now, the longer he looked at his own reflection, the more dolefully shame-stricken and meek the reflection looked back upon him, until all on a sudden it went through him like a sword to think of his own mad and insolent presumption. There had been actual moments when he had thought that Lady Ella Santerre could love him. He hid his face in his hands, and his spirit tasted a bitterness of self-disdain, such as had never before assailed him. He recalled himself as trembling before Mr. Blandy. He knew pretty well what Mr. Blandy was by this time, and he remembered that for years he had been his servitor. He saw himself in the yellow canary smalls, and his fellow-dependents upon the charity of the Elizabethan Harward kicked and cuffed and tweaked him once again, and he submitted. He swept Blandy's offices, and lit the fires. He lived in his own old sordid lodgings, and drew his own wretched pay. He walked through Gallowbay streets again, not unnoticed, to his own sore-nerved fancy, but despised. This was the creature he had been, and this was the creature who had dared to insult a noblewoman by the offer of his

hand, and to browbeat her into acceptance through her father's needs.

Like abler people, Kimberley could see only one side to a thing at a time, and now that remorse and shame had their hour with him, he could recognise no excuses, and admit no palliation. He had known doubts by the thousand, but now, for the first time since this business had had a beginning, he set his feet upon a certainty, and he could never dream his delicious dream again, never rise again into that ridiculous cloudland into which he had been mad enough to soar.

And now that he was convinced at last of what he ought to have known all along, what was he to do? Tell Windgall what he knew to be the truth, claim the papers, burn them in the Earl's presence, and give Ella back her freedom? Make over everything to Ella by a deed of gift, and run away to some far corner of the world where he could never be discovered or heard of? Kill himself, and leave her all he had? A thousand projects and fears were in his mind. He loved her all the while, and to surrender her was to give up everything. Such a tempest had scarcely a right to rage within the bounds of so weak a nature. Such a tragedy as this had no more business in the life of a man like poor Kimberley, than an earthquake would have in a flowerpot. And yet it was actually there, and the weak heart was riven by it. He loved her, mean as his beginnings had been, and poorly as he thought of himself; he loved her, and she was in his hands, and would not strive to fly away from him. He loved her, and his insolent passion might triumph if he would, and no hand but his own would come between it and him.

He locked the door and, sitting down by a table, laid his head upon his hands and cried, with tears of shame and renunciation and despair. There was no doubt or struggle in his mind as to what the practical end should be. Ella would be released from her engagement, and Windgall must be compelled to keep the parchments and the papers. Nothing in the whole wide world—not the rack, the strappado, nor the stake—should persuade him to take them back again.

If he could have doubted he would have held these thoughts at bay. But love gave him clearness of vision, and there was no way of escape from the truth. Ella had been loyal to her own sense of duty, but she could not hide her own weariness, her own hopelessness, and Kimberley's whole training in life, as well as his whole nature, had taught him to be quick to find

himself unwelcome. And indeed, to a heart like his, the discovery of the truth was unavoidable. He had no power to delude himself into such a sense of his own deservings as would make him seem worthy of her.

"She never cared about the money," said Kimberley, rising and pacing the room with tear-blotted face and disordered hair. "She's too noble, she's too pure, she's too good for this world. She wanted to save her father, and she was ready to break her heart to do it. But she shall never break her heart through me. No, no. That isn't what I had the cheek to love her for, when I was getting thirty-five shillings a week at Blandy's office, and it isn't what I love her for now. If I'd been born to the money, and had been a gentleman, it might have been a different thing, but I was a fool to think she could ever be happy with a man like me. How could she? Oh, how could she?"

And in spite of all the nobilities of the good and gentle heart he bore, he could not help feeling the sting of this inequality, and the bitter unfairness of his fate. It was bitter to have been mocked with such a dream. It was hard to hold everything in his hand, and to be obliged to cast it thus away. It was hard to be compelled to despise himself so deeply—it was terrible to look at that Alpine height of folly his own hands had raised.

He did not feel as if he were doing anything heroic—nothing indeed could have been much further from his mind than that—and he did not look as if he were bent upon an heroic expedition, when, fearful lest his tear-stained face should be observed, he dodged out of the mirror-panelled room and into his own chamber. He poured eau de cologne into water and bathed his face, to be rid of the traces of his tears, and he dressed himself for once without troubling his valet. The loud-patterned trousers, the gorgeous waistcoat, the egregious tie, the striped shirt with its big cuffs and high collar, the white hat, the cloth boots, the primrose gloves, and blue morning coat, were his ordinary adornings, and he gave them no thought. The gold cable which crossed his waistcoat, the valuable rings which clustered thickly on his little fingers, the amazing bull-dog's head of a pin, were all out of keeping with his nature, and, as it was to turn out, were curiously unfortunate for the moment, but he never gave them a conscious thought. He had grown used to them.

When he left the house on foot, and stole through the grounds until he reached the gate which opened on the high road to Shouldershott Castle, there was not one sign of the hero visible about him. To the outer sight he was simply a common place-

looking little man of early middle-age, who was fearfully and wonderfully over-dressed. And yet within the foolish figure there were such agonies and such resolves as made a hero of him whether he would or no.

Once or twice he lingered, and once he actually turned back again and walked slowly homewards for a hundred yards, but he checked himself and faced the Castle again, though with a trembling heart.

"It's no use writing. I couldn't explain. I must see him and face it out. It can't be so hard for him as it is to me." There are people who could make that reflection consciously, and could take a pride in its heroism, but he was not one of them. "He never saw how she has suffered. He couldn't have seen it, or he wouldn't have endured it. But he ought to have known better,"—this was the only thought he had that was not wholly self-accusing—"he ought to have known better than to dream of selling her to a snob like me."

CHAPTER XXIV.

But Kimberley was not the only man in the world who was breaking his heart for a woman. He was not even the only man in the world who was breaking his heart about Lady Ella Santerre. Jack Clare had had times as heavy as those through which the little millionnaire had passed, with this added bitterness—that whereas Kimberley had only been forced to despise himself, Clare had been compelled to despise the woman he loved, and whom he had once thought (as lovers have a knack of thinking) something scarcely mortal. Yet this bitter mood never lasted long with him, and he oftener pitied than despised her. Sometimes he even arose to an understanding of the spirit of self-sacrifice which moved her, and then he had the relief of despising the father instead of the daughter.

He had made all his arrangements, and in ten days the ship to which he was to entrust himself and his fortunes would sail. The practical man he needed had been engaged with a dozen English labourers, the necessary machinery for farming operations was already bought and paid for, and was lying at the docks, and now, when the hurry and excitement of preparation

were all over, he was left nothing to do but to make his farewell to the few people to whom he cared to say good-bye at all. His mother and Montacute were to say good-bye in London, and had arranged to spend two or three days in town before his departure. Major Heard had also undertaken to see him off. A rather small and exclusive military club to which he belonged had bidden him to a farewell dinner, and he had written back, with almost the only pretence he had ever practised in his life, to say that every hour before his departure was already occupied by its own engagement. He had a full week upon his hands, and nothing whatever to occupy him.

It was natural that Ella should fill most of his thoughts, for it was she who was driving him away from England. Now that the time of farewell drew so near he began to be newly tender about her, and to be more eager than he had been to find excuses for her. She had been cajoled or besought into the engagement by her father—frightened into it by the family debts—persuaded into it by Alice—worried into it by needy and affectionate female cousins. For all the soreness of his heart, Jack acknowledged the severity of the temptation, but that Ella should have fallen into it sickened him with all the world.

And yet, now that he was going away for good and all, his heart so yearned over her, that there was but one natural end to all his mental tossings to and fro. He was fully resolved never to return to England, and to part from her in silence and anger was more than he could bear. He must needs go to Gallowbay and say farewell.

"I have no right to go," he told himself. "I have no right to be a reproach to her. But she never cared for me, or she wouldn't have engaged herself to marry a fellow like that. What right had I ever to suppose she cared for me, except as a sister might? She never gave me any. And if I go away without seeing her she'll think I despise her, or hate her. I'll just go down and say good-bye, as I would to any other old friend."

He packed his portmanteau, took cab to Euston, and train to Gallowbay, and arrived after a tormenting journey. He put up at the Windgall Arms, and wrote this letter:—

"My dear Ella,—

I am going to New Zealand next week, and shall not return to England. I should like to see you to say good-bye.

I know we are finally apart, and I have nothing but farewell to say, but I want to see you when I say it.

"Yours very truly,

"JACK."

When he had sealed this and addressed it, it occurred to him for the hundredth time that Windgall might not be pleased at his appearance, and for the hundredth time Jack answered that objection.

"It's likely enough that he won't want me to see her," he said grimly. "But I'm going away, and I leave England in nine days from now, and if she'll see me, I *will* see her."

It seemed so probable to his mind that Windgall would intervene if he knew of the proposed leavetaking, that little as he liked clandestine ways, he determined not to risk the father's interference, but to send his message privately to Ella. So, with the letter in his pocket, he strolled out of Gallowbay, and unconsciously quickening his pace in answer to the hurry of his thoughts, he swung on eagerly towards the Castle. When he came near to the lodge-gates he felt a sudden inclination to go back again, and abandon his project. Overcoming that prompting of the spirit he pushed aside the lesser gate and entered, and there was the elderly lodge-keeper standing at his door. Now old Hine knew very well the story of Jack's attachment to his noble master's eldest daughter, and the young man's appearance here seemed, to his simple mind, to forebode a row. But Captain Clare had always been a prime favourite with him, as he had been with almost everybody who knew him, and especially with servants and dependants. He had had a jolly way with him, and a free hand in spite of his narrow income, and, better still, a ready ear for any little tale of trouble. A smile for a housemaid, a friendly word for a groom or gamekeeper, a spare minute for a gossip with a housekeeper—a genial recognition of the kinship of flesh and blood—could always be counted on from Captain Clare. All sorts and conditions of men had liked the young fellow, and his smiling face had carried sunshine with it everywhere, but now he was quite pale and haggard, and to the lodge-keeper's eyes he looked dangerous.

"Ah, Hine!" said Jack, with a cheery voice. "How do you do?"

"How do you do, sir?" asked Hine in turn, touching his hat to him. "The sight of you *is* good for sore eyes, Captain Clare."

"I'm going to New Zealand next week," said Jack, walking into the front room of the lodge and looking about him.

"New Zealand?" said Hine. "Not to stay there, sir?"

"Yes, to stay there," the youngster answered, flushing a little. "I'm leaving England for good and all. Where's Mrs. Hine?"

"She's laid up, sir," said Hine, "with a baddish cold. It's turned out a bit feverish. She's been abed a week."

"I'm sorry to hear that," said Jack. "You must say good-bye for me."

"Thank you, sir, I will," the lodge-keeper answered. "She'll be grieved to have missed you, sir. New Zealand?" Jack's news was an evident astonishment to him.

"Look here, Hine," said Jack, producing the letter with a blush. "I want this to go up to the Castle. I want it to go privately. You understand. I don't think his lordship particularly wants to see me here."

"I understand, sir," Hine answered, as he turned the letter over in his hands.

"Do you think you can manage to deliver it yourself?' All this was not very dignified, and he could have wished that he had walked straight up to the Castle.

"I can try, sir."

"If you can see her say I am in the King's Avenue." He put a sovereign into the half-reluctant hand.

"Yes, sir," said the old man. "I'll manage it if I can. You've growed a little thin, sir, if you'll excuse me saying so. I'll go up at once, sir. The poor young feller is hard hit," said the ancient Hine to himself. "The King's Avenue? All right, sir," he said aloud, and Jack with a nod swung out of the lodge and made at a rapid pace across the park.

The old man walked up to the Castle, and the mournful lover marched on to the King's Avenue, where two great lines of elms, vast in girth and venerable, ran alongside each other for nearly a quarter of a mile. Here he paced up and down impatiently for an hour, and grew despairing, and full of rage and old tenderness and unavailing yearning, insomuch that he felt a desire to smite his head against the tree which stood nearest. In this compound miserable mood he walked eagerly to every opening through which Ella might by any possibility approach, and glaring down each walked eagerly on to another. In his eager impatience he continued this wild ramble until he was hot and tired.

Now, as the destinies which ruled this business ordained

events, Kimberley's resolve had failed him for the moment. Perhaps, to speak more truly, he failed to see his best way through the painful interview which lay before him, and in his incertitude he had turned aside, and with bent head and a heart full of unhappy thoughts had wandered through the park for an hour or more, until he came upon the identical avenue in which Jack Clare was raging up and down.

Kimberley stood between the boles of two great trees, and, himself unobserved, saw a strange gentleman prowling up and down the avenue, in a mighty hurry, which at first looked altogether purposeless. Clare and he had never met, and, except by hearsay, were perfect strangers to each other. Kimberley had not even so much as seen Jack's portrait, but the unsuccessful rival had been made acquainted with the successful rival's features by Sylvester's lifelike caricature, and would have been pretty sure of him anywhere. Meeting him here he was bound to know him.

Without the remotest suspicion of the stranger's identity Kimberley watched his hurried and self-contradictory movements, and was at last awakened to the conclusion that the gentleman had lost his way and was in a hurry to find it. It was always at a cost of much nervous pain that he made up his mind to address a stranger, but he was one of the kindest-hearted men in the world, and so, with his usual tremors, he advanced. When he had followed Clare a little way the younger man turned, caught sight of him and, stopping dead in his hurried walk, looked at him at first with amazement and then with scorn. The wild idea crossed him that the Earl might have intercepted the lodge-keeper, learned his errand, and then sent the accepted lover to warn a poacher from his domain.

"I beg your pardon," said Kimberley, raising his white hat and speaking with a nervous blush and tremor, "I thought you might have lost your way."

Jack stood still and eyed him from head to foot. His glance took in the whole of Kimberley's vulgar glories, and the extraordinary dog's head pin, with its ruby eyes and jewelled collar, would on another's figure have provoked him to inward laughter. As it was, he smiled with an exceedingly bitter aspect, eyed the little man from head to foot once more, and, turning short upon his heel, resumed his walk, with his hands in the pockets of his shooting-jacket. He had not wanted any witness of his last farewell to Ella, and that this man, of all men in the world, should appear at this moment was savagely galling.

Kimberley thought the stranger's behaviour remarkable, and even insolent.

"I shall be very happy to direct you, sir," he said, notwithstanding.

Jack turned his head and looked at him once more with a face of unmistakable disdain, and then sauntered on a second time without a word. This unaccountable behaviour excited in Kimberley's breast as much ire as he was capable of feeling.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, following Jack's sauntering footsteps. "I did myself the honour to address you." This time Jack did not even turn his head, but walked on quietly, as if unconscious of the other's presence. Within he was boiling over, but he gave no sign. "Perhaps, sir," said Kimberley, who had scarcely ever been so wrathful in his life as this curious reception of his politeness made him, "you are not aware that this is private property."

Now Jack, who was by nature a sweet-tempered man, had been sorely tried for many a day. He was expecting Ella all the more eagerly because he more than half despaired of her coming, and to have this witness of their meeting was simply and purely impossible. Would no scorn of manner give him a hint to be gone? He scarcely dared trust himself to speak, but he turned and looked a third time at the little millionnaire, and again walked on in silence. There was nothing to be got out of a row with Bolsover Kimberley, and angry as he was his own sense of dignity made a scene unlikely.

"Perhaps, sir," repeated Kimberley, growing actually exasperated at the stranger's disdain, "you are not aware that this is private property."

Then Jack Clare turned upon him swiftly.

"Pardon the question," he said with savage suavity, "but, pray, sir, are you often mobbed?"

"No, sir," retorted Kimberley, not being able just then to find a better answer, and half inclined to think he had a madman to deal with.

"Excuse me again," said Jack, "but do you desire to be mobbed?"

"No, sir," replied Kimberley, more fiercely than he had ever spoken in all his meek life, until that moment.

"Then why do you wear that scarf-pin and those clothes?" demanded Captain Clare. The downright insolence of the question soothed him. He did not wait for an answer, but

walked on, as if once more sublimely unconscious of Kimberley's presence.

"You are an insolent fellow, sir," cried Kimberley, behind him. "You are an insolent fellow, sir." Jack walked on regardless of his wrath. "Do you hear, sir?" said Kimberley, fairly enraged, and forgetting even to be astonished at the courage he displayed. "I tell you that you are an insolent fellow, sir." He was small and shy, and meek enough, heaven knows, but even he could resent so bold an insult.

"You pestilential little cad," cried Jack, wheeling round upon him, and letting out all his wrath at once. "Go home!"

"Cad, sir!" answered Kimberley, facing him in ruffling indignation. "Whom do you call a cad, sir?"

"I call any man a cad," said Jack, "who goes about with a suit of clothes like that."

It was not a polished shaft, but it went home. Oh, it went home, and, as Carlyle said of Balaam, "an ice-taloned pang shot through brain and pericardium." Jack walked on, and Kimberley stood rooted to the ground. He had not a word to say in answer, and he had scarcely even a conscious thought, but he stood crushed and overwhelmed beneath the sense of his own humiliation. His fineries had been the one thing on which he had relied to make himself look like a gentleman, and he knew now what they made him look like.

He could have wished the ground to open beneath his feet and hide him. He did not see that the stranger had hurriedly left the avenue for one of the spaces leading out of it, and he was so bitterly wounded that his heart had no room for anything but the feeling of this new mortification. He thought of Ella, and tears of shame and misery rose with a keen pang of pain to his eyes. Had she always seen him as a patent and transparent cad? Had she gone about with him knowing that he was thus labelled to the eye of every lady and every man of taste who beheld him? What else was he? Oh, what else was he? He gave one helpless look about him, seeing things all blurred in the sunshine through his tears, and walked down the avenue, with the thick-fallen leaves rustling about his feet. By-and-by he came upon a little arboured seat, almost hidden by autumnal foliage of many colours, and pushing the luxuriant boughs aside he entered the arbour. Many and many a time he had reproached himself with his own unworthiness—that very day he had proclaimed himself a snob—but there is the widest difference between the contemptuous things a man may say of

himself, and the contemptuous things another man may say of him. Shame, shame, shame, raged through his heart, gust after gust. He felt no resentment now. There was no room for resentment. He knew that the insult which had been flung at him had passed unspoken through the minds of scores of men in his presence, and could believe that it had many a time been spoken in his absence. The dreadful truth had been thrown at his head in a fashion downright brutal, but he knew it for the truth and it crushed him.

He had cried bitterly that morning to think of all he must surrender because of his own unworthiness, and the passion of his self-sacrifice had opened a freer channel for his tears. And his heart being still sore and tender from that recent suffering, there was nothing for it now but to sit in this little arboured retreat and to cry anew for this fresh misery. Bear with him for a minute, and with me, who tell the story of so weak a creature.

Jack Clare had scarcely spoken these savage and contemptuous words than he saw Ella approaching at a little distance, and moved swiftly away to meet her. The uppermost sentiment in his mind was one of rage, a sort of sick fury of contempt and wonder that his goddess should have stooped to such a man as he had just seen, and should have stooped for money. But as he drew nearer, and saw how pale and mournful her lovely face had grown his heart smote him, and he advanced gently. As he took her hand in his and looked at her, Bolsover Kimberley faded from his mind, and all anger vanished.

"You got my note," he said; "you knew that I was here?"

"Yes," she answered. "I could not refuse you, but you compromise me by coming in this way. Come to the Castle, and see papa, and say good-bye to him."

"I was wrong to come at all, perhaps," he answered. "But I couldn't help it. And I couldn't have you think I went away gloomy, or changed at all. If you hadn't seen me you might have thought from what I said when I saw you last that I was going away with a broken heart, and that I was embittered against you."

She was afraid of herself and of him, and with downcast eyes she walked on slowly, he moving at her side.

"You are going to New Zealand?" she said, lifting her eyes to his face for a mere instant. "You have given up your career in the army?"

"If anything had been stirring," he answered, "I might have stayed, but in these piping times of peace I have grown

tired of the army. I have bought land in New Zealand, and I am going out to work it. In a few generations it will be valuable—it's absurdly small in cost at present, and I have bought five thousand acres. It will be something for Montacute's descendants. There is no reason why the Montacutes should always be poor, but somebody must put his hand to the plough, and the Fates choose me. The old condition of things is getting a little worn here, and a new one is gradually growing. We must work like the rest of the world."

These were not the things which were uppermost in his mind, but it was safer to speak of them than of his real thoughts.

"I am sure you are right," she said. "I have often thought that if I had been a man I would have chosen such a career for myself." They walked on a little further in silence, their feet rustling in the dead leaves. There was a sense of something guilty and contraband in this meeting to both their minds. "You will say good-bye to papa," said Ella almost beseechingly.

"Don't ask me to do that, Ella," Jack answered. "He and I are best apart. I might have known—I did know well enough—that this was likely to be a painful meeting to both of us, and I might have spared you. But I was selfish, darling. I am going away. I shall never see you any more, and I wanted some memory of a last word."

The tears stood so thickly in her eyes that they half-blinded her, but she looked up at him in spite of them, and spoke simply and bravely. It was no time for pretences.

"I should have been grieved if you had gone away without a good-bye. I hope you will be prosperous and happy."

"Don't think," said Jack, beginning to see that her burthen was heavier than his own, "don't think that I am going away to brood and to be unhappy. I had my dream. I shall never forget it, but I am not going to be unhappy about it. And you'll think of the Antipodean farmer at times, won't you?" The attempt he made to say this jollily was a failure so complete that it almost broke him down.

"I shall think of you always as if you were a brother." Cold comfort to Jack's breaking heart, yet something.

They stood in silence immediately in front of the arbour into which Kimberley had retired. He could see them, himself unseen, but there was no way of escape for him. He saw and heard and understood. The stranger who had so wantonly insulted him was Ella's lover.

"I won't say it isn't hard," said Jack. "One doesn't even

see the same stars there. But it has to be borne, and I shall bear it. I shall be a better man for having known you. I never loved another woman, and I never shall."

"Go now," she said, with silent but fast raining tears. "We shall always think of you." She scarcely knew what words she used. "You will come back again to England when the pain is over."

"That will be never," said Jack, groaning in his speech. "Never! No, my darling, it's good-bye for good and all. We shall never see each other again in this world." Do what he would, his voice quivered. "I haven't the heart to go, yet go I must. Good-bye, dear. Good-bye."

He stretched out both hands, and she laid hers within them. They stood thus, scarcely seeing each other for their tears, and suddenly, with a passionate gesture, he drew her to his breast and kissed her. Her head fell back from his shoulder, and looking down upon her he saw that she had fainted. He held her in his arms and called her name, but she gave no answer or sign of answer. The blue lips and colourless face frightened him, and he said stonily to himself, "I have killed her." He laid her gently down upon the grass, and supporting her head upon his arm, looked down upon her in an agony of fear and self-reproach.

Then his mood changed.

"Curse the money-bags that came between us," he cried wildly, and began to chafe her hands within his, and to moan above her. "Damn the man that broke her heart and mine. Darling, look up." He kissed her hands and chafed them, and his hot tears fell upon her unconscious face.

All this Bolsover Kimberley saw and heard. His were the money-bags that brought down that curse. He could almost have found it in his heart to curse them too. What had they done for him but make him wretched? He had been happier without them. And he loved her—he loved her as dearly as the man who knelt above her.

Love and money. They make and unmake most of the troubles of the world.

By-and-by Ella began to revive, and Jack to murmur soothing foolish words to her. When she realised the situation she tried to rise, and he helped her tenderly to her feet.

"You can't walk yet, dear," he said. "There is a seat near here somewhere, a little arbour of a place. You had better rest there for a time." He took a step—he had need to take but

one—and laid his hand upon a bough. "This is the place. Sit here a while, and I will go," said Jack remorsefully. "Forgive me for the pain I have given you. I was a coward not to go without seeing you at all."

Kimberley stood with clasped hands and indrawn breath. He had never known anything like the agony of that moment. But all three were spared the discovery of his presence there.

"No," said Ella feebly. "I am better here. I am quite strong. Good-bye, dear. Leave me now. Good-bye."

"I can't leave you like this," he said. "You are not fit to be left alone. Let me help you back; if only for a little way, let me help you."

She yielded to his pleading, for in truth she could not walk unaided, and they left the place slowly, she leaning on his arm, and he bending protectingly over her.

They had scarce quitted the avenue when there came upon them no less a personage than the Earl of Windgall. He stood for one minute in the paralysis of astonishment, and then advanced swiftly.

"Captain Clare?" he said sternly, and looked from Jack's suddenly-lowering face to Ella's, with the trace of tears upon it still.

"Captain Clare, my lord," said Jack sardonically. "Lady Ella is unwell. I can surrender her to your care."

"May I ask," said his lordship, his grey face much greyer than common, and his eyes glittering, "to what I am indebted for your presence here?"

"I am going to New Zealand—" Jack began.

"Oh!" said my lord, "is this the way?"

"I came here to say good-bye to your daughter, my lord. I leave England next week, and I do not propose to return. I will ask you to remember that we two were bred like brother and sister."

"We can part without more words, sir," said Windgall.

"Very well," responded Jack. "Good-bye, Ella, and God bless you always. Good-bye, my lord."

There were bitter words on the lips of both Clare and Windgall, but they parted then and there, and nothing more was said between them.

"Ella," cried the Earl when Jack's stalwart figure had disappeared, "was this meeting an accident on your part, or did you deliberately endure the scandal of that man's presence here?"

"Pray choose another tone, papa!" she answered, with a manner gentler than the words. "I met him because he asked me to see him and to say good-bye."

Windgall, for excellent reasons of his own, forbore to say more just then.

CHAPTER XXV.

For a long time after the sound of the rustling footsteps had died away Kimberley stood in the little arbour, and surrendered himself to his own emotions. At length he wiped his eyes with an expression of new resolve, picked up his white hat, which had fallen upon the sward at his feet, and, pushing his hand through the leafy screen before him, surveyed the avenue. Finding that the coast was clear, he emerged from his shelter, and fixing his hat tightly with both hands, walked towards the Castle. His face was an epitome of all unhappy emotions, his eyes were red and swollen with tears, his features were besmeared and soiled from the same cause, and every now and again an involuntary sob escaped him, but in spite of all these signs of weakness he walked like a man who knew his purpose and was resolutely bent upon it.

There were two or three roads between the King's Avenue and the Castle, but the nearest lay through the gardens, and he chose it, partly because it *was* the nearest, and partly because he felt himself less likely to be seen upon that way. He was in no fit state to be seen, but he was so filled with his own resolve as to be oblivious of his appearance, and his thoughts so galled him that he walked more and more rapidly.

Alice, who was pacing up and down a gravelled pathway with an unread book in her hand, thinking dismally of her sister's future, saw Kimberley at a distance, and guessed by his gait that he was in some way agitated. As he came nearer she saw the unmistakable signs of his recent tears, and wondered. Kimberley, catching sight of her in turn, bore down upon her swiftly, with an aspect so wild and unusual that the girl was more than half afraid of him. When he reached the place where she stood, he was panting from the speed at which he had walked, and a great sob broke from his breast as he halted with clenched hands and disordered air before her.

"Mr. Kimberley," she cried, "what has happened?"

Kimberley moved his head from side to side like one in extreme pain.

"I came here to-day," he began, "to see Lord Windgall. I have found out what a mistake I have made, and I meant to tell him of it."

Had he lost his fortune? Had he decided that he could not spare—or would not spare—that ninety thousand pounds of which Ella had spoken? The girl was as far from being mercenary as she well could be, and yet these guesses shot through her mind in an instant.

"I don't want to speak ill of his lordship to you," he continued less wildly, "but it was cruel not to let me know. It was cruel to her, ten thousand times more cruel to her than it was to me, but I suppose he knew that if he had told me I should have gone away." The urgent misery of his voice, and the pained way in which his head moved from side to side, indicated to the girl such a depth of suffering, that she pitied him in advance with all her heart, but his words meant nothing to her.

"You alarm me, Mr. Kimberley," she said. "But I do not understand you. Pray, compose yourself. Can I help you in any way?"

"Lady Alice," said Kimberley, "you were the very first I ever spoke to. Until that night on the lawn when I first told you I had never said a word to any human being. You said, 'Go straight to her and ask her for a plain answer. That's what you'll do if you have the courage I give you credit for.' But you never knew where you were sending me? Tell me you never knew where you were sending me."

"I did not know it," she answered, suddenly chilled and in arms against him. "I did not guess it."

"I'm glad of that," he said wretchedly. "I have never liked to think that you would have said it if you had known."

"You are speaking of your engagement to my sister, Mr. Kimberley?" she demanded. "I can see that you are greatly agitated, but you must surely know that you are speaking very strangely. You must know that this is a remarkable thing for you to say to me."

"I was such a fool," pursued the hapless Kimberley, "as to think I might be able to make her happy. Do you think I would ever have spoken a word to break her heart if I'd known what I was doing? I thought I could make her happy."

"And has she told you," Alice asked, with a sense almost of exultant hope, despite of his visible suffering, "that you never can?"

"No," returned Kimberley. "She hasn't told me so, but I know it, I knew it before this afternoon. I knew it this morning, and I was coming here to say so. But I know it better than ever now."

"You were coming this morning to release Ella from her engagement?" If that were true, it was indeed a thing to be grateful for, for Ella's sake: but what of her father's embarrassments? Of course she would not stoop to speak one word of this to Kimberley, but the thought of the blow which his renunciation of his claim upon her sister's hand would deal her father, mingled a sense of terror with her feeling of relief.

"Yes," Kimberley answered. "I was a fool to think that I could ever make her happy."

That he had really and truly loved her, the girl had pity enough to see, and it broke his heart to surrender her. She understood that it was love which impelled him to this sacrifice, and a man with so good a heart, she thought, could scarcely be merciless to her father. This hope had hardly entered her mind when she despised it.

"Mr. Kimberley," she said, after a lengthy pause, "I am very inexperienced and young, and ignorant of the world. This is a matter of great delicacy, and I am quite unable to advise you. I am not quite sure that it is right in me to encourage you to speak of it. I feel as if I were eaves-dropping, and had surprised a secret. Don't you think you had better speak first to papa about it?"

"Did you know," asked Kimberley, in a certain stony and uninterested way, "that Lady Ella had a sweetheart?"

"Mr. Kimberley!"

"Did you know," he went on, in the same strange way, unchecked by her exclamation, "that there was somebody she cared for? Did you know that they were both breaking their hearts, and that he was going abroad for good and all, because she was going to be married?"

"If these things are true," she answered him, with a hauteur that not all her pity could suppress, "there is all the more reason why you should not speak to me any further. You must see," she continued, in answer to the troubled amazement with which he looked at her, "that I cannot listen to any story of

my sister's secrets, unless she herself tells them to me. I am afraid that you are the victim of some strange misunderstanding, Mr. Kimberley. You had better see papa at once."

"I'm glad you didn't know," he answered. "I couldn't help thinking that you'd have been kind enough to her to tell me if you'd known. I'll go and see his lordship, now. I'm very glad you didn't know."

Alice stood looking after him as he walked to the Castle, and a score of conjectures passed through her mind. As for Kimberley, there was but one strand in him which was not broken for the time. Nothing but the unconscious sense of honour held the rest of his senses together. Ella must be freed from the wretched obligation she had taken upon herself in obedience to the dictation of her father's needs.

At the entrance to the Castle a liveried servant met him and stared at him in so wild a fashion that even Kimberley noticed it, and bethought him of his own condition.

"Where is his lordship?" he asked stoutly, though there was a hint of breaking in his voice.

The obsequious flunky led the way to the library. They were not often visited by moneyed people at Shouldershott Castle, and Kimberley had been lavishly generous to the servants, who were therefore overwhelmingly polite to him, although, as a matter of course, they knew their place a great deal too well not to despise him.

"There's somethink hup," said this particular gentleman to his chum and companion, when he had parted from the millionnaire. "Old Windgall's just come in with the millyinhairess as is to be, lookink as black as the 'ob, and she a cryink, and now the lawyer's clerk have put in *his* appearance, and him a cryink also. Blubberink, by gad," the noble creature added, "like a bull-calf! Him and old Windgall's in the library. Before I could get out of the room his lordship sings out, 'My dear Kimbly' (says he), 'what in the name of Hevans is the matter with you?' I suppose the little snob had fell down and hurt hisself."

"Lady Ella wouldn't ha' cried at that, I fency," returned the other noble creature. "Not if he'd ha' broke his neck. *I* don't know what the aristocracy is a coming to."

"The erristawcracy?" cried number one, with a look of mingled pity and disdain. "The erristawcracy is going to the dayvil!"

It is hard to feel that one's Order (as a distinguished lady

novelist always calls it) is deteriorating. One must belong to the Order to feel the full force of the grief.

The Earl was alone when the noble creature opened the door for Kimberley, and he arose in some amazement and disturbance at his prospective son-in-law's forlorn appearance.

"My dear Kimberley," cried his lordship, "what's the matter?"

"My lord!" said Kimberley, "I expected you to act to me like a man, to say nothing of a nobleman."

"Sir?" said his lordship, in such wrath and astonishment as he had rarely felt in his life.

"Perhaps," said Kimberley, "I am too hasty, and if I am I beg your pardon. But I don't think you could help knowing it, and if you did know it——"

"Know what, sir?" cried Windgall.

"Did you know, my lord," asked Kimberley, "that Lady Ella was breaking her heart because she was to marry me?"

"Really——" began his lordship in a tone of haughty expostulation, but he got no further.

"You didn't know it?" demanded Kimberley. "I should be glad to think you didn't know it. I should be glad to think it was all a blind mistake."

"This is all very extraordinary," said his lordship, angry, and humiliated, and almost despairing all at once. "May I ask what has inspired you with this extraordinary belief?"

"I can only tell you partly," answered Kimberley. He had no feeling of shyness now. "I can only tell you partly, but I know it. I guessed it days ago, and now I know it."

"Have you spoken of this strange supposition to Lady Ella—to my daughter?" Windgall asked him.

"No, my lord," said Kimberley. "I was coming straight to you, but I met Lady Alice on the way, and I spoke to her about it."

"Great heaven!" exclaimed Windgall. "You spoke to a child like that upon so delicate a suspicion. I am amazed, Kimberley! I am amazed!"

"My lord," said Kimberley, "when I first came and spoke to you about this I brought some papers, and asked you to take them from me as a friend, if I may use the word between a nobleman and a man like myself."

"There has never been any doubt about your claim to use the word," returned Windgall, "since we have known each other."

He was a kindly man enough by nature, and had no wish to be cruel to his daughter, but it was hard to think that the

wreck of all his hopes was near and unescapable. He could not think so altogether as yet.

"Thank you, my lord," said Kimberley. To say "my lord" often, fell in with his ideas of state, and some degree of stateliness seemed essential. "But I remember that you told me afterwards that though you might take them from a relative you could not take them from a friend. I've thought since then that, perhaps, in spite of all I said, you thought I had bought those papers to have you in my grasp. I am not a gentleman, my lord, but I hope I am above that. I was very poorly reared, my lord, but I never did a cruel thing in my life. I couldn't. I was attached to Lady Ella long before I had any money, and I shall never care for anybody else. But I was a fool to think that I could ever make her happy, and I resign my claim upon her hand, my lord, and I must leave your roof for ever."

If there was something of a touch of melodrama in Kimberley's last words he did not know it, and Windgall was too agitated to think of anything but the matter of his speech.

"Stop, sir," cried the Earl in a rage of embarrassment and despair, but tolerably cool outside in spite of all. "I have a right to a fuller explanation of this astonishing resolve on your part, and I must have it."

"The only explanation I can give, my lord," said Kimberley, "is that this engagement is breaking Lady Ella's heart."

An absurdly overdressed, meek little man, with his hair in ridiculous disorder and his face besmeared with tears, might well be supposed to cut a poor figure in the eyes of a man of Windgall's breeding and ways of thinking, but notwithstanding his disadvantages there was something almost dignified in Kimberley's aspect at this moment. His self-sacrifice and his inward sense of right lent him an air of simple manliness.

"This conversation is necessarily painful to both of us," said the Earl, who felt and saw the change. "But may I ask the foundation of your belief?"

"My lord," said Kimberley, "I'm afraid I can't tell you everything, but I have watched for days past, and I was sure before——"

"Before what?" Windgall's heart grew hot at the thought that Kimberley might have known of Clare's visit, might even have seen that parting at which Ella had shed tears.

"I beg pardon," answered Kimberley. "But I can't answer you. But what I say is true, I am not fit for her, my lord, and all the money in the world could never make me worthy of her.

If I had always been a lawyer's clerk it would have been better for everybody. I beg your pardon, my lord. I had no right to insult you by reminding you of that."

"Do you know, Kimberley," said his lordship, "that the breaking of an engagement like this, an engagement of which all the world is cognisant, is an insult to my daughter and to me; an insult on which the world may place any miserable interpretation which pleases it."

"My lord," returned Kimberley, "I am very sorry, but I can't break Lady Ella's heart."

"What did Alice say to you when you broached this fancy to her?" Windgall asked. "Did she confirm it?"

"No. She said it was a matter of great delicacy. She said she couldn't advise me. She said I was wrong to speak to anybody so young and inexperienced about it—perhaps I was."

"Surely you were wrong," said his lordship. "Kimberley, I cannot help believing that your supposition is altogether groundless and absurd. I know Ella too well to suppose that she would accept so serious an offer without having well weighed her own intentions, without having consulted her own heart. I declare to you, Kimberley, I swear to you, that no pressure was brought to bear upon her, that I was simply and purely your ambassador in the matter."

"My lord," answered Kimberley, "I don't charge you with wanting to sell your daughter's happiness. I hope you never saw how wretched the match made her. I hope——"

"How—how dare you, sir?" stammered Windgall, in an anguish of wrath and shame.

"I can't say what I want to say," said Kimberley. "If I had been clever and well-bred it might have been different. I was wrong to come here at all, my lord. It was no place for me. I was a fool. It was a shame to ask a lady like Lady Ella to marry a man like me. I won't help to break her heart, my lord. I can't. I won't do it. Not if I break my own a million times over."

The Earl sat down and beat his foot upon the carpet. It was true enough. It *had* been a shame to ask Ella to marry a man like this, and yet the man was a gentleman when all was said and done. It was plain he loved her. His very surrender of her with that tear-stained face was proof enough of that.

"By heaven, Kimberley!" cried his lordship, in spite of himself, "you are a noble-hearted fellow. And I never thought so highly of you as at this moment. Understand me! I am not pressing my daughter upon an unwilling suitor. I am only

trying to heal a breach and to prevent a dreadful scandal. I do not believe that my daughter would be unhappy as your wife."

"She would only break her heart, my lord," answered Kimberley. "That's all." He began to breathe hard again, and though he fought against it with all his might he could not repress a sob. "I sha'n't be in a fit state to speak at all if I stay here any longer," he added huskily, "and so, I'll ask you to excuse me for all the trouble I have caused you, and I'll say good-bye, my lord."

He bowed and he was gone. The Earl's visions crumbled, as he sat and looked at them. No gilded grandeur for his favourite daughter, no ease from debts and duns for him. No possibility of the acceptance of those papers now. He was bound in honour to send them back again, and Kimberley would feel, even if no resentment awoke in his mind as the final result of his self-sacrifice, that he had no right to refuse them. In point of fact, whatsoever Kimberley might do, the Earl saw the absolute impossibility of an acceptance of the magnificent offer. He felt to the full how hard it was to have to make such a sacrifice to honour. He knew pretty surely that if he destroyed the papers Kimberley would make no claim against him. In a certain sordid way he had a full right to destroy them. But he knew that he had not acted too honourably already, and the temptation never had a second's real strength for him. Yet it was not an easy thing to part with the papers.

It was not easy either to know that he had to take the news to Ella, and he was in anything but a pleasant humour when he finally compelled himself to seek her.

"Ella," he said, "I have forborne to speak to you as to one of the events of to-day, filled as I was with surprise and alarm. But another thing has happened of which, unfortunately, I am compelled to speak. Mr. Kimberley has become possessed of the idea that the engagement into which you entered with him is utterly distasteful to you, and he has called upon me in a state of distress of which I can convey no idea, to release you from your engagement. You know best," he added desperately, "what ground there is for his belief."

She looked at him and could see that he was too keenly wounded by his own disappointment to be in a mood for justice.

"You know best what ground there is for his belief," his lordship repeated.

"I cannot tell," she answered wearily, "what ground he had. I tried never to afford him any."

"This match," he asked, "has been distasteful to you all along?"

She looked up at him as he stood before her, and he caught in her glance a weary surprise which stung him to the quick. For Ella's part, she was so sore-hearted, and he seemed so little to regard her, that for a moment she half despised him. Then came the reaction, and she felt ashamed of that natural sentiment, and hastened to atone for it.

"I tried to show no distaste, papa," she answered.

"But you felt it?" he demanded. "You yielded to his offer for my sake? You thought so ill of me as to believe that I was willing to sacrifice you altogether for the sake of Mr. Kimberley's money?"

But after all Windgall was not cut out for the *rôle* he was trying to play, and his daughter's submission smote him sorely.

"I had never thought it was what it seems to have been," he said. "I never thought it possible or likely that you would form a romantic attachment." He laughed, shortly and savagely, as he said this. "But I did think that you would find certain compensations, and that you could have been fairly happy. If I had thought you likely to be unhappy, I would never have taken his offer into consideration for a moment." She was silent, and her silence was like an accusation to him. The events of the day had scarified his nerves, and he was more sensitive than common. "Do me the justice to believe that, Ella," he said, walking from the end of the room and pausing before her.

"I know it, papa," she answered. "I am sure of it."

In effect there was nothing more to say, though much more was said between them. The real wrench came to Windgall that night when he sat down in his library and packed up and sealed the papers Kimberley had given him.

"My dear Kimberley," he wrote, "you will understand the absolute impossibility of my acceptance of the documents which accompany this letter. Much as I regret the unhappy event of to-day, I must ask your permission to say that you have acted throughout in a most magnanimous manner."

After all the Earl of Windgall could not help being a gentleman, though the rust of poverty had corroded spots about him.

The receipt of this letter added another drop to the bitterness of Kimberley's cup, which was full enough of distasteful ingredients already. He had cut himself off from the last chance of serving the woman he loved so dearly. What was his money worth to him? If Ella could have taken it, if she would have

taken it, he could have handed over every penny without one thought, or chance of a thought, of regret. He would have gone back to his clerkship, and could have been almost happy if only she would have taken the money and been brilliant and bright and happy with it, even at a distance from him. These thoughts are not to be taken to the foot of the letter as here expressed, perhaps, but he honestly thought they were. The one passionate longing of his soul was that Ella should be happy. As for him—the poor little hero—what did it matter about him? He had been a charity boy; he had been an errand boy in Blandy's office; he had been a clerk in Blandy's office for many a dreary year; people had been used to think little of him, and he had grown used to think little of himself. What right had he, of all men in the world, to be a millionnaire, when that peerless lady, the daughter of a long line of people nobly bred and gently nurtured, could feel the pinch of poverty?

The proud man's contumely, and his own, and the pangs of despised love, rankled, how terribly, in the poor heart. He could well-nigh have died for shame; he could well-nigh have died for pity of himself. He was ashamed to show his bleared eyes and scalded cheeks, and the servants knew that something was amiss, and gossiped and wondered, as he knew they would. Everything hurts the hurt; everything, like the hand of the Irish schoolmaster in Hood's poem, "smites his scald head that is already sore."

But all on a sudden, in the midst of his tears, Kimberley stood up, in the astonishing dressing-gown and smoking-cap, and clutched the papers that lay on the table before him.

"I can do something for her after all," he said. "And I will. I will. I'll do it, if it breaks my heart."

CHAPTER XXVI.

Mr. Amelia sat at luncheon in the revolving chair with a half-finished article by one of the specially retained and specially paid members of the staff of *The Way of the World* before him. He took his measured dose from his medicine bottle, and his regulated bite from his sandwich, and dangled his little legs with an air of genuine enjoyment. Even in the midst of his leisure he took up a pen at moments and added a casual sentence to the special article. He was seated alone, but in the next room

the Scottish graduate, his private secretary, was busily engaged in writing out a lucubration which Mr. Amelia, in the person of another of the specially retained and specially paid, had just dictated to him. These two non-existent people were worth ten guineas a week between them to the little editor, and to think that he was earning that ten guineas in a single day was like wine and meat to him. At times he smiled to himself, and once or twice he nodded with an almost exultant self-approval. So much could brains do in this world, when the owner of the brains knew his way about, and was ready to take advantage of the chances which his good fortune or his own shrewdness unearthed for him!

The sound of a knock at the door broke in upon his comfortable reflections.

"Come in?" cried Mr. Amelia, and the office-boy thrust in his head. He was a boy of a confidential turn, and yet seemed always to guard himself as if to say that all his communications were made without prejudice.

"There's a gentleman wants to see you, sir," said the boy.

"Name and business?" replied Mr. Amelia curtly. The boy withdrew, and the editor, having first corked the medicine bottle, hid the half-finished materials of his feast beneath a little pile of loose proof-sheets. Before this was well done, and the proof-sheets were rearranged to Mr. Amelia's satisfaction to look as if nothing were beneath them, the boy returned, bearing a card of thick and dogseared pasteboard somewhat soiled. Upon this was written, in a painful hand, the name of Mr. Augustus Vidler, and the editor glancing at it intimated that Mr. Vidler might enter.

"Good afternoon, sir," said Mr. Vidler, who wore the air of a man with a grievance. "I have got, sir, something of a complaint to make, and we thought we might as well, sir, come to the fountink-ed at once."

"Oh!" said Mr. Amelia, setting his hand upon the table, and turning himself in the revolving chair until he faced his visitor. "Something in the nature of a complaint?" His voice and manner implied a humourous disdain, and Mr. Vidler responded to them with a laboured severity.

"We do not desire, sir," said he, "to throw anything in the way of Mr. Webling's prawsaperity. Mr. Webling is an old and vallyhued friend of ours, and we wish him well. Nobody wishes Webling better than I do, sir."

"I will ask you," said Mr. Amelia, with more than his usual crispness, "to make whatever communications you have to offer

me as brief as possible?" He moved a hand towards the papers on the table. "I am busily engaged."

Mr. Vidler bowed with stately courtesy.

"This," he answered, producing a crumpled paper from his pocket, "is a cawpy of your newspaper, sir. At our little social gethering, sir, where you once did us the honour to be present, there was several pieces of news from this paper discussed last evening, sir. It was observed that from the first the fashynibble hitems in your newspaper was mostly the hitems discussed in our little circle. To make the story short, sir, Mr. Webling were taxed with a breach of confidence, and though he defended hisself with a degree of argument, he were evenchally overpowered."

"Indeed?" said Mr. Amelia coolly. "This is all very interesting to your friends and yourself, I have no doubt, but I don't quite see how it concerns me. Mr. Webling had certain information in his hands, and found a market for it. If all of you want to be paid as well as Mr. Webling, it is no doubt very natural, but you can't expect me to pay you."

"Sir," returned Mr. Vidler, "you are prodigious mistaken. That is not our object."

"Will you be so good as to come to your object?" demanded the little editor. "I have told you already that I am busy."

"We consider, sir, that our confidence have been abused," said Mr. Vidler.

"Very well," said Mr. Amelia, taking up a pen and dipping it in the inkstand. "You must deal with Mr. Webling."

"Mr. Webling have already made the amend honourable," replied the visitor, "and have undertook to purchase a piano for the use of the club out of his misgot funds."

"And that, I suppose, is why you don't all want to be paid. Very considerate indeed. Will you kindly let me know at once why you come to me with this interesting history?"

"I was requested, sir, by the committee of the club," said Mr. Vidler, "to call upon you, sir, and to complain of the way you have acted, sir. I was instructed to say, sir, as your conduct was uncalled for in a gentleman."

"Very well, Mr. Vidler," said the little man, smiling outright, "you have relieved your conscience. I admit that it is very hard upon you that Webling should have been employed, but then, you see, Webling was known to me before you. If I had known you before I knew Webling you should have had the job. You know, from your own sense of wounded virtue,

how much that would have saddened Webling. Good afternoon, Mr. Vidler." He arose from the revolving chair and opened the door. "George, show this gentleman out. You have expressed yourself with perfect clearness, Mr. Vidler, and I quite understand you. You needn't take the trouble to say another word, thank you. Good afternoon."

Mr. Vidler finding himself, much to his own surprise, outside the office, saw nothing for it but to go about whatever other business he might have in hand, and Mr. Amelia, returning to his seat in the revolving chair, disinterred the sandwich and the medicine bottle and proceeded to dose himself anew, with alternate carefully measured supplies of solid and liquid. He had received the news of the rebellion of the Retired Suvvants with creditable sang-froid, but he felt very much as a general may be supposed to feel when he hears news of the loss of a cherished position. Since the first issue of the journal many means of acquiring news about the doings of the aristocracy had been put in his way, but Mr. Webling had been his principal fount of information, and since that fountain was cut off, his supplies bade fair to run unpleasantly short. In spite of his own brilliant editorship of the journal, and in spite even of the four or five special articles he contributed to it weekly, under as many aliases, *The Way of the World* seemed to take no great hold upon the people except by means of its fashionable gossip, which was universally admitted to be very intimate and interesting. He knew very well that he would suffer if the journal lost Mr. Webling's services before a substitute of some sort could be found for them.

"I must find somebody to take Webling's place at the club meetings," thought Mr. Amelia, and he was just saying as much half aloud, when it occurred to him that possibly Mr. Webling himself might still be brought to deal with him for a week or two until new arrangements could be made. About last night's meeting, for instance, it was necessary to have something, to save the fashionable columns from almost absolute bareness.

So with no great hopes, but determined to try his best, the little man put on his little overcoat and gloves and his well-brushed tall hat, and set out on foot for Waverley Terrace. Mr. Webling looked guilty when he saw his sometime lodger, and admitted him with a stealthy air, as if he were under espionage.

"I am in a bit of a hurry for copy this week," said Mr. Amelia, thinking it best to profess ignorance of all that had happened, and to throw the necessity for explanation altogether on Webling's shoulders, "and since I happened to be in the

neighbourhood, I thought I'd look you up and see if you had anything ready."

Mr. Webling mournfully rubbed his hands together and shook his head.

"The club have forbid any further correspondence, sir," he said.

"The club?" said Mr. Amelia, with natural surprise. "What do you mean?"

"It were from the club, sir," returned Mr. Webling, with a gentle melancholy, "that I received my infamation. There were a row last night, sir, so to speak, at Vidler's—preaps you may recollect Vidler, sir,—and I were called upon to retire from the sassayety."

"Excuse me," said Mr. Amelia, with a spice of satire in his voice, "but you don't express yourself with your usual clearness, Webling. Try to let me understand you, if you please. What was the row about—and who made it?"

"As for the row, it were Bordler—if you recollect Bordler, sir—as began it. Bordler produced a copy of your paper, sir, and read out a number of hitems which was undoubtedly the subject of discussion at our last week's meeting."

"Aha!" said Mr. Amelia, as if a light broke in upon him suddenly. "And the club objects to any member making public use of the conversation held at its meetings?"

"Parrycisaly," returned Mr. Webling.

"Aha!" said Mr. Amelia again; contemplatively this time. "And how much notice do you propose to give me before you break off your engagement?"

"Why, sir," said Mr. Webling, uncomfortably, "the thing is hevidently hat a hend, sir." He was so careful to be polite that he breathed on all the aspirates almost stertorously.

"Can't be," returned Mr. Amelia. "Must have something to go on with." The forbidden correspondent shook his head. "Nonsense," said the editor in reply to this gesture. "The club isn't your only source of information, you know, Webling."

"Why no, sir," said Mr. Webling, with a hopeful twinkle in his eye. "I can't exactly say it is, sir."

"You go about, you know," continued his employer. "You hear things outside the club. If some of the things you hear outside the club happened to be talked about in the club afterwards, is that your fault?"

"I dare not go so far as to say that, sir," replied Mr. Webling. "No, sir. Not so far as that, sir."

"Not so far as what?" demanded Mr. Amelia, with some asperity.

"My fellow-members would diskiver it, sir, if it was kerried on so far. Prehaps, sir, the cream of things," he suggested, bending forward with his arms depending before him as if he held a tray and proffered the cream of things to Mr. Amelia. "Prehaps, sir, the cream of things skimmed off of the evening meeting, just a item here and there, sir, of the very best, and the rest put in next week when it had had time to get talked about, and so to speak be common property."

"Oh, dear, no," Mr. Amelia answered, decisively, "nothing of the kind would suit me. I don't want the buried bodies of old scandals dug up and brought to me. I want fresh information. Now what can you give me this week? Outside the club, of course."

The greatest of men unbend at times, either from nature or for policy, and Mr. Amelia actually winked at Mr. Webling. Mr. Webling smiled a feeble smile in answer, and fell to rubbing his hands.

"It can't be much, sir," he said, with a sheepish look.

Mr. Amelia produced his note-book, and Mr. Webling guiltily whispered in his ear. The little man transmitted the substance of the guilty whisper to Mr. Pitman's system of shorthand.

Suddenly the rapid pencil paused, and Mr. Amelia looked up with a start of surprise.

"What did you say?" he demanded.

"The millyinghair, sir," said Mr. Webling, "Kimbally—Bulsover Kimbally, sir, have quarrelled with the Hearl of Wingle, and have left the Castle. Shouldershott Castle, sir."

"Yes, yes," said the little editor, "I know. At Gallowbay. What did they quarrel about?"

This, it appeared, was more than Mr. Webling knew with any degree of accuracy. But he poured into the ears of Mr. Amelia some garbled version of the story of the Honourable Captain Clare, and he knew that Captain Clare had had a farewell interview in the park with Lady Ella, and supposed that Kimberley had become aware of it.

"It came direct to Bordler," said Mr. Webling, "from Tollgett, the hearl's hown man. There's no mistake about it. There have been a reg'lar shindy, and the nubble hearl is hup the spout this time beyond a doubt, sir."

"Ah!" said Mr. Amelia, thoughtfully. "I'd give an extra pound, Webling, to know the truth of this. Do you know—

what's his name?—Tollgett?—the Earl's own man, as you call him?"

"Hintimate!" said Mr. Webling. "Bordler as good as said as Tollgett were coming to town at the close of the present week, and would be present at the club's next meeting."

"Could you find him out and bring him to me?" asked Mr. Amelia. "I would make it worth your while. It would be worth a pound apiece to you."

It was natural for Mr. Amelia to suppose that if Kimberley had quarrelled with the Earl of Windgall he would like, in any reasonable and safe manner, to have a dig at the Earl of Windgall; and if the Honourable Captain Clare had been courting the young lady to whom Mr. Kimberley had been engaged, it was natural for Mr. Amelia to suppose that Kimberley would like a dig at Captain Clare. If one could not laud oneself and damage one's enemies it was scarcely worth while to be proprietor of a journal at all. It never occurred to the little man that he would be doing anything but the one thing agreeable and desirable to his proprietor if he found out uncomfortable things to say about the Earl of Windgall and Captain Clare, provided always that the news of their quarrel was fairly confirmed.

Mr. Webling thought it possible that Mr. Tollgett, the Earl's own man, might be induced to visit Mr. Amelia, and promised to do his best to meet with him in the course of the week. The little editor having milked Mr. Webling until that gentleman would yield no more, departed. The fashionable gossip was certainly attenuated that week, but Mr. Amelia was a journalist in full practice by this time, and thoroughly understood the art of arranging the greatest possible number of words around the smallest possible modicum of meaning, so that the average number of columns got filled in one way or another.

It turned out eventually that Mr. Webling was unable to catch the precious repository of all the information Mr. Amelia desired to secure, and on the eve of the next meeting of the club he waited upon the editor to announce his failure. Something of the journalist's enthusiasm in the dissemination of news had touched the flunky. It was a pity, he said, for as things were turning out the matter was growing more and more interesting. The Earl of Windgall was in town, and Tollgett was with him. Tollgett would undoubtedly be at the meeting next evening. As Mr. Webling understood matters, a devout understanding had been made to that effect.

"You'll be there as well?" said Mr. Amelia.

Mr. Webling admitted this, but he had run to the end of the tether. He dare give no more information. He was again suspected, and the members were wrathful against him. The meeting was to be held at his own house, in the usual rotation, and he had received notice that he would be called upon for a solemn promise to supply no more news to *The Way of the World* from the club. In brief, Mr. Webling dreaded the total loss of his social position, and though Mr. Amelia, in his zeal for his employer's interests, offered an extra sovereign, the Retired Suvvant stood firm.

"Wait a minute," said Mr. Amelia, brushing his upright hair into unusual disorder, as he took an agitated pace or two about the editorial room. "The meeting to-morrow night is in your own house, you say?"

"Yes, sir," assented Mr. Webling, "in my own house, sir."

"If you could let me get the news I want," said Mr. Amelia, deliberately and slowly, "and could swear with a clear conscience that you had never seen me after the meeting, nor communicated with me after the meeting, either by writing or by messenger, and if I gave you forty shillings for it, would you do it?"

"I am not a miracle, sir," said Mr. Webling, humbly. "If I was, I would."

"I suppose," said Mr. Amelia, "that the conversation is bound to turn upon this question?"

"Suttin to," responded Mr. Webling.

"I remember"—Mr. Amelia approached Mr. Webling and took him thoughtfully by the coat—"I remember a china closet, or something of the kind, below the stairs. A little window opens into it from the room in which you meet. A window pretty high up in one corner of the room."

"Yes, sir," replied Mr. Webling, obviously puzzled.

"If I were in the house," said his late lodger, impressively, "I could slip down from my old room and take my place there without you knowing anything about it." Mr. Webling looked extremely doubtful. "You can swear you have not seen me," said Mr. Amelia, with his own nice sense of honour in full play, "and can speak the truth. You can swear you have not in any way communicated with me after the meeting, and speak the truth. Come, I'll make it fifty shillings. Three pounds. Beyond that I can't afford to go."

Mr. Webling hesitated, wavered, fell.

A good hour before the time fixed for the meeting on the

following day, a little upright figure marched with assured step through the mist and slush of Waverley Terrace, Waverley Road, N., and pausing to tap at the door of No. 158, was admitted with something of a clandestine air.

"There is a fire up-stairs, sir," said Mrs. Webling, "and the daily papers."

Mr. Amelia nodded in response, and mounted the staircase, and Mr. Webling, whose countenance was unusually pallid, and whose hands trembled perceptibly with apprehension and excitement, carried up a lamp, and pointed out to his visitor that the shutters were so secured that no light issuing from the chamber could apprise his later guests of the fact that it had an inmate.

"The risk is rely dreadful," said the landlord, upon whose forehead stood a cold moisture which confirmed his own professed reckoning of the situation. "Three pound is dear at this price, sir, and it is only for a old lodger, and a person which always behaved handsome, that I would undergo it."

"Pooh!" said Mr. Amelia scornfully. "Don't be an ass, if you can help it, Webling. If you can't help it, be an ass somewhere else."

"For Evan's sake, sir," said Webling in a whisper, "don't speak so loud." Mr. Amelia snorted disdainfully, and began to read the paper. "I beg your pardon, sir," the wretched host went on a moment later, "but if I am not to hold any communication with you after this, perhaps you might like to let me have the three pound now, sir."

Mr. Amelia produced a purse and paid the three pounds at once, and then preserved a silence so obstinate, and read the paper so busily, that the landlord, having expended upon him many unnoticed adjurations to be careful, withdrew with burglarious stealth, and closed the door behind him.

In a while rappings and ringings at the front door began to announce the arrival of the guests, and the little man with his own door ajar listened for the name of Mr. Tollgett. It came at last, and he heard Tollgett hailed by a dozen voices, one after the other. It was evident that Tollgett was to be the *pièce de résistance* of the evening. At least as much as that was evident to Mr. Amelia, who had a knack of making up his mind with some rapidity, and hated to lose time over anything.

When the time arrived for Mr. Amelia to steal down-stairs, and to take his place in the china closet, he experienced, in spite of himself, many qualms of fear, and could almost have

wished that he had not undertaken the enterprise. If any one of the guests should emerge and should discover him, it would certainly be excessively unpleasant, and the thought that the Retired Suvvants, as a body, might even have recourse to personal violence sent an uncomfortable thrill through the little man's heart. But everybody knows (at least in theory) how strengthening an influence a sense of duty has it in its power to lend, and Mr. Amelia was bent upon doing his duty to his employer, and resolved to make the duty profitable to himself. When he had made things as unpleasant as he could for the gentleman with whom his employer had quarrelled, he would be able to tell that employer with how much zeal and cunning he had worked in his behalf. It was not likely that Kimberley would grumble at having to pay pretty liberally for this service, and to be loyal and to make loyalty pay was comfortable.

No ill-timed exit on the part of any one of the guests led to Mr. Amelia's detection, and he gained his place in the china closet in safety.

"Next week, gentlemen," Mr. Bordler's voice was heard clearly through the little window-frame, "we shall meet on our own permanent premises, and our friend and host for the present evening have made the amend honourable by the purchase of a piano for our use. As appointed by the committee I have secured a young feller to attend regular for eighteen pence a evening, his smokes, and being a total abstainer, his ginger beers. Messyers Hall and Snell and me has heard the young feller perform with the highest gratification."

"Where's that draught come from?" said a gruff voice when the applause which followed this announcement had died away, and almost as soon as the words were spoken the window was somewhat roughly closed. The voices reached Mr. Amelia's ear in an indistinct murmur, and he dreaded the frustation of his scheme. Carefully drawing a chair to the side of the dresser he mounted in the half-gloom of the place, and pushed the window open a little way with the tips of his fingers. The voices came back again in a gush of sound. The members of the club were indulging in unrestrained converse for the moment, and nothing was clearly audible to the listener. An extraordinarily cold and searching air wandered about Mr. Amelia's little legs, and crept about his neck and into his ears, and being but lately transported from the warm comfort of the fireside in the upper room he began to shiver. It was undeniable that the draught of which the gruff voice had complained found its way through that small window.

Fearing lest it should again be closed he stood and shivered, and listened until the conversation grew more scattered, and by-and-by Mr. Vidler's voice was heard.

"Tollgett," said Mr. Vidler, "everybody is anshus to hear your news."

A murmur of subdued applause circulated about the chamber. Mr. Amelia strained his ears and stood on tiptoe.

"Well, gentlemen," said somebody, whom he rightly supposed to be Mr. Tollgett. "The proceedings at our house has certainly been peculiar. As everybody knows already——"

"Cuss that draught," the gruff voice broke in, and the window was slammed to with sudden violence. Mr. Amelia, whose fingers were resting on the ledge, was so severely pained that he could scarce repress a cry. For a minute he was so busily engaged in sucking the damaged places and squeezing them under his arm to take the pain away that he forgot the purpose of his presence there, but recovering from the first extreme of anguish in a while, he pushed the window gingerly open once more. Mr. Tollgett still had possession of the ear of the house.

"Of course the gell is compromised, and though you might have fancied that Kimbly would ha' put up with any sort of damaged goods to get into a family of title, he showed more spirit than I ever give him credit for, and threw her over then and there."

"What sort of feller is he?" asked one of the listeners.

"Well," said Mr. Tollgett, in a tone of high-bred refinement, "he's a low feller, of course. He was a charity boy, and after that a clirk in a lawyer's awfis. He's freeish with his money now he's got it. Last time I see him in Gallowbay, he stopped me and give me a ten pound note—prob'ly mistook it for a fiver, but I did not undeceive him." The assembled gentlemen laughed.

"I should think," said one, "as W. would be glad to let the Captain have her now, if he would take her."

"The Captain knows a trick worth two of that," replied Mr. Tollgett, whose voice spoke not only of a high-bred refinement, but of a certain half-tolerant weariness of the world and its ways. "The Captain is going to New Zealand."

"New Zealand?" said two or three together.

"Yas," said Mr. Tollgett. "He's bought land there, so they say, and he's agoing to farm it. It's time the Montacutes did something. They're as poor as Job, the whole kit of 'em."

"And what sort of a cove is the Captain?" demanded the person who had asked for a description of Kimberley.

"The Captain?" replied Mr. Tollgett, with a tolerant little laugh. "Well, gentlemen, the Captain——"

"Won't this winder keep shut, Mr. Webling?" cried the gruff voice, angrily. "Rely, before the gentlemen of the club is invited to a member's house, the member ought to see that the house is air-tight."

Mr. Amelia withdrew his fingers hastily from the ledge. In his desire to hear he was standing on tiptoe and had need to hold on somewhere to support himself.

"I am afraid, gentlemen," said Mr. Webling, in tremulous tones, "that the latch is broke inside. With your permission I will go and look at it. I am sure, gentlemen, that nothink has been undone on my part to make the proceedings comfortable."

With this, Mr. Webling, after some difficulty, squeezed himself from the room and Mr. Tollgett continued, but the listener was confused between his expectation of the landlord and his attempt to catch the meaning of the speech, and so made out but little. By-and-by Mr. Webling, with a shaking finger at his lips, came stealing in, and mounting on the dresser by Mr. Amelia's side made two or three pretences at an attempt to fasten the window.

"Won't it hold?" demanded the gruff-voiced man from within.

"No," said Webling, pushing a pale face through the orifice.

"That style five-and-six," said Mr. Vidler, beholding him thus framed, and the members of the club laughed readily, like men who are satisfied with a small dose of humour at a time.

Mr. Webling retired, and Mr. Amelia spent the rest of the evening in a prolonged and harassing warfare with the gruff-voiced man, who, whenever the listener pushed the window gently open pushed it roughly to again with the point of a walking-stick, so that the editor's mental notes of the meeting were necessarily somewhat scattered and mutilated. He made out enough for his purpose, however, and more than enough, and he went home that night and wrote an article under the simple title, "An Episode in High Life." Nobody ever wrote an article more pungent or more satirical. He fully exposed all the villainies he had heard attributed to Captain Clare, and he chaffed the Earl of Windgall in the most airy and engaging manner. Though he named no names and drew no faces it was impossible for anybody with a knowledge of society to escape the meaning of the article, and when he came to see it in print, Mr. Amelia was delighted with it. It was undeniably brilliant, and so suavely caustic in its tone, that the writer

felt he had gone beyond his own reputation and exceeded his own common powers.

The article appeared. It stirred the town. People talked about it everywhere, and Mr. Amelia heard a hundred allusions to it in omnibuses and railway-carriages. But before it was twenty-four hours old he received a visit from Mr. Webling, who was paler and more perturbed than he had been even on the night of the meeting.

"Great Evans, sir!" cried Webling, wringing his hands when he beheld Mr. Amelia, "what a herror you have made. It was that dreadful winder that Jenner would keep on a closing."

"What's the matter?" asked Mr. Amelia, striving to preserve an air of calm.

"Matter?" cried Webling. "Good Lord, sir, it wasn't Captain Clare who sold that broken-winded horse, nor him that forged the cheque. Nor him that run away with the undertaker's daughter. Nor him that plucked young Roquefort at Baden-Baden. Nor him that had the duel with Count Petit-Pousit."

"It wasn't?" gasped the Editor, seizing the back of the revolving chair, and lurching with it like a man at sea.

"No!" gasped Webling in reply. "They'd stopped talking about Captain Clare before a word was said of them things. It was Captain Stracey of the hundred and ninety-second ridgement. I was afraid something would happen with that winder."

"Thank you, Webling," said the editor, recovering his self-possession in some degree, though his head still spun with the shock of this intelligence. "I have pinched my fingers in more ways than one," he added, surveying his own bruised finger-tips.

"If I was you, sir," said Webling, "I should hook it. They'll make a criminal case of it, everybody says, and as likely as not it'll be a matter of five years."

CHAPTER XXVII.

Kimberley, with the fateful legal papers arranged in a despatch-box, dared to drive over to Shouldershott Castle, but was met at the lodge-gates with the news that his lordship had that morning set out for London.

"Do you know when he will come back?" asked Kimberley, meekly and confusedly, of the ancient Hine.

"It was understood, sir," answered the lodge-keeper, "that he was to be away a fortnight."

"Dear me!" cried the millionnaire, in a startled voice. "A fortnight? I shall be too late." His eyes and nose were red as if with influenza, but his cheeks were extremely pale, and his whole expression was tired and haggard. He sat in indecision for a moment. "Is his lordship at Portman Square?" he asked in a little while.

"The town house is closed, sir," said Hine, and named the hotel in which his lordship was staying.

"Thank you," said Kimberley absently, and sat there still for a full minute. Then he turned round with a manner which bespoke a new resolve. "Drive to the railway station at Gallowbay."

The groom just touched the mare with his whip, and away she started.

"Looks worried, the poor little chap does," thought Hine, looking after the slashing dog-cart. "I thought no good could come out of Captain Clare's coming here. It's a pity money gets into such hands. If it had befallen to Captain Clare things might have been pleasant now."

Kimberley did not know how nearly the popular guesses hit the truth, or he might have been unhappier even than he was. There was one respect in which they never for an instant came near it. Nobody guessed the part that Kimberley himself had played, but then he did not look likely to play the hero, and popular opinion does not so often exalt gratuitously as it degrades without reason.

As it happened, the dog-cart reached the Gallowbay railway station in easy time for the second London express.

"Drive home, now," said Kimberley to the groom, "and tell Weekes to pack a portmanteau and to come to London by the next train." The groom drove off, and Kimberley, with the despatch-box in his hand, walked up and down the station platform. The manager of the Gallowbay bank and the Vicar of the parish were there amongst others, and they and everybody else who knew him saluted the shy little man as he paced the flags. He was member for the borough, and the local personification of money, and the respectful salutations were a thing of course, but somehow of late Kimberley's mind was always dwelling on the meanness of his earlier life, and these tokens of consideration from the people he had been used to look upon with awe, stung him as severely as they had done when he first began to receive them. It was an immense relief to him when the train reached the platform and he could hide himself in a first-class carriage in which no one else was travelling. He felt

very wretched and cold and insignificant. The more he contemplated the amazing audacity of his own daring in respect to Lady Ella, the more humiliated and the more insignificant he felt, until his self-abasement amounted to an actual agony. His heart was ice and lead, and it ached persistently with a real physical pain.

He reached London at last, and drove to the hotel in which the Earl of Windgall was staying. His lordship was abroad, and had left no word of the probable hour of his return. Kimberley surrendered his despatch-box to the care of the hotel manager, and wandered the streets dismally until long after nightfall, calling now and again to inquire if Windgall had yet returned. It was after ten o'clock when he caught sight of the Earl in the act of stepping from a hansom cab to the pavement.

"My lord," said Kimberley, advancing. Windgall turned with almost a jump. "I called at the Castle this morning and they told me you had gone to town. I want very particularly to speak with you. Can you give me a few minutes?"

"Certainly," said his lordship. "Certainly." My lord's heart was beating like a hammer, and he was asking himself already how he should yield to Kimberley's persuasions. He had done his duty and sent back the precious documents honourably, and he knew that Kimberley was here to force them back upon him.

When they entered the vestibule of the hotel together, and Kimberley asked for and received his despatch-box, Windgall knew, without need of any faculty of clairvoyance, what its contents were. The manager led the way to the Earl's apartments and threw open the door of his sitting-room.

"A glass of wine, Kimberley?" said his lordship.

"Thank you," responded Kimberley, somewhat faintly, "I will take a glass of wine."

"You are not well?" cried his lordship, with solicitude, as Kimberley laid both hands on the upper rail of a chair and leaned upon it heavily.

"I am tired," said the little millionnaire, wearily. "I am very tired."

Windgall placed a seat for him at the table and he fell into it with an air of profound dejection and fatigue. The grey nobleman, anxiously regarding him meanwhile, gave his orders to the manager, and when they were left alone seated himself at the opposite side of the table and talked disjointedly until a waiter appeared, nursing a bottle of Burgundy in a wicker cradle. Kimberley emptied his glass twice before he spoke, and then began.

"I have something of the utmost importance to say to your lordship."

"Yes," said Windgall in a waiting tone. Kimberley drew the despatch-box towards him with both hands and slowly unlocked it. The Earl's heart began to beat again, so that his pulses made in his own ears much such a confused noise as a paddle-wheel makes in water. Without the contents of that box his state was pitiful. With the contents of the box he was a free man.

"I gave these to your lordship," said Kimberley, turning the case upside down and strewing the documents upon the table, "and begged you to accept them."

"Your conduct has been marked throughout by a most perfect generosity," replied Windgall. "I was fully sensible of that fact when I returned the papers."

"You sent them back," said Kimberley, with a remarkable stoniness of manner, "and told me that it was impossible for you to keep them."

He sat staring at the table with a something dogged and even sulky in his look, his lordship thought. Had he felt the return of the papers as an insult?

"I felt it impossible," returned his lordship. "Realise my position, Kimberley. Let me beg of you—realise my position. How could I have retained them?"

"And now," said Kimberley, "they belong to me again, my lord?"

"Decidedly," cried Windgall with an odd inward chill. "That, I take it, is beyond dispute." He tried to say this laughingly, but the effort was not very successful. He looked at Kimberley, and was at once alarmed and puzzled by what he saw.

"If I say anything," said Bolsover, more doggedly and sullenly than before, "if I say anything to wound your lordship's feelings I shall be very sorry."

"I beg you," said Windgall, "to use the utmost freedom."

"You didn't understand my meaning, my lord," Kimberley went on, "when I first offered you these papers. Or, perhaps, you felt too proud to take them for nothing. Lady Ella was made the victim of your mistake, my lord." Windgall sat miserably silent. It was not pleasant to be taken thus to task by a man he had always hitherto felt it easy to despise. "I don't say anything about myself," pursued Kimberley, "because there is nothing I don't deserve for being such a fool. But we can never forgive ourselves, my lord, for our wickedness and cruelty."

"Really, my dear Kimberley," cried Windgall, "you survey things through a medium which distorts them strangely."

"Did you know, my lord," said Kimberley, panting in his speech, and shifting the scattered papers with tremulous fingers, "that Lady Ella——? It's like—like blasphemy!" he said desperately, and for a little while he was silent. When he resumed his hands were trembling so that it discomposed the Earl to look at them, and his face changed from white to scarlet and from scarlet to white with an alarming alternation. "Did you know, my lord, that Lady Ella was in love?"

"No," said his lordship, rising suddenly from the table and beginning to pace the room in great agitation. "I will be perfectly plain and honest with you, Kimberley. Years ago—three or four years ago—I became aware of an attachment to my daughter on the part of an almost penniless youngster, and for her sake, knowing that nothing but misery could spring from a union between them, I saw the man and spoke to him. I represented things in their proper light to him. I saw his mother, a most estimable lady, whose means had long been unequal to the task her position imposed upon them. She, like myself—With those papers lying on the table between us any affectation of reserve on my part would be as futile as it would surely be absurd. She, like myself, knew the galling misery which is entailed on people in our station by insufficient means. She agreed with me. By her influence and mine the acquaintance between her younger son and my daughter was brought to a close. I had never any reason given me for believing that Lady Ella entertained one thought of regret for him. The young man, to my personal knowledge, is within a day or two of his departure for New Zealand, where, I am informed, on the most competent authority, he intends to settle permanently. You know now," Windgall concluded, "as much as I know myself."

"I saw enough, my lord," said Kimberley, who, during the Earl's speech, had never lifted his eyes from the table, or ceased to toy nervously with the papers there, "I saw enough to tell me that Lady Ella was unhappy. I was coming to tell you so, when I saw the parting between Lady Ella and her sweetheart. My lord," cried the millionnaire wildly, staring up at Windgall, and beating on the table with both hands with the gesture of one in extreme bodily pain, "it broke my heart! it broke my heart!"

He buried his face swiftly in his hands after this outburst, and sat in silence, quivering all over. The Earl, with one hand resting on the back of a chair, looked strickenly across at him.

"Kimberley," he said, scarce knowing what words he used, "this is very hard to bear. It is bitter to me to have to think that my child deceived me."

"Deceived you?" cried Kimberley, looking wildly up again. "She broke her heart in quiet for your sake, my lord! Oh, my lord, my lord, you can't let him go away after all she's suffered."

My lord took to pacing the room again, and answered nothing. He began more and more to understand Kimberley, and, for once in the world, completer understanding widened and deepened esteem. He was angry, too, and humiliated, and was strongly inclined in his own heart to fight against his new opinion of Bolsover Kimberley.

"My lord," said Kimberley, gathering up a double handful of the papers and stretching them towards him, "you agreed to take these once for a wedding gift." Windgall looked back at him and paused in his disturbed walk about the chamber. "Will you take 'em now? My lord, my lord, marry Lady Ella to the man she loves, and take these for a wedding gift."

"Kimberley," said Windgall, stammering, "you are a noble-hearted fellow."

"My lord," said Kimberley, "I helped to torture her. I have a right to help to make her happy. Take them, my lord." And he advanced with the papers in his hands. But Windgall's self-possession was beaten down, and he was as wildly agitated as a millionnaire himself. He recoiled and waved his hands against the proffered gift.

"How can I take them?" he demanded.

"If you don't," said Kimberley, "I'll use them. I will. I'll put them every one in force to-morrow. Oh no, my lord, I never meant to threaten you. Hasn't there been trouble enough already? Take them, my lord, and make her happy. Take them—do take them—as a wedding gift."

He thrust the papers into Windgall's reluctant hands, and half of them fell about the floor. Both Kimberley and the Earl stooping swiftly at the same instant to pick them up, their heads came into contact with ridiculous force, and they looked at each other more wildly than ever. Perhaps the physical shock did something towards sobering both of them. They picked up the scattered papers. Kimberley heaped them all in Windgall's hands, and he, standing thus burdened, said, with more gravity and self-possession than he had until then been able to secure——

"This is a most noble and most generous proposal on your part, my dear Kimberley, but I really do not see my way

clearly. Believe me," continued the grey little nobleman, with a lip that quivered in spite of all the self-restraint he imposed upon himself, "I value this magnificent offer to the full. I appreciate your self-sacrifice. I—I do not think, Kimberley, that I have ever known so noble an act before. It—it renews one's faith in human nature."

He advanced to the table and laid the papers down.

"Let us talk soberly and quietly of this matter," he said, again placing a chair for Kimberley, and drawing another near to it.

"I'm not quite well, my lord," said Kimberley. The Earl looked keenly at him, for there was something exceedingly strange in his voice, and he lurched a little as he laid both hands on the chair which had been placed for him. "I haven't been well for two or three days," he murmured vaguely, and Windgall, putting an arm through one of his, led him to an arm-chair with much concern. He sat there two or three minutes in silence, and then passing his hands across his forehead and his eyes, looked about him with the air of a man awaking from a drugged or drunken sleep. He saw Windgall, and then the untidy pile of papers on the table, and recalled his wandering wits. "You won't break Lady Ella's heart, my lord," he said then. "You'll keep those things and let her marry the man she loves?"

"You are extremely unwell, Kimberley," said his lordship; and, indeed, it was easy to see that, either from malady or fatigue, the poor little millionnaire was quite broken for the time.

"You'll take them?" said Kimberley, feebly.

"Yes," said his lordship, "I will do my best. I will find out Clare to-morrow. God bless you, Kimberley. But you are ill—you are really very ill."

"Tired," answered Kimberley.

"Worse than tired, I am afraid," said Windgall to himself, as he looked at his companion.

"If I die," said Kimberley in a loud voice, which quavered suddenly down into a murmur, "everything is to go to Lady Ella, with my dearest love and worship."

The loud tones fell into such an indistinctness that Windgall made out nothing beyond the first three words.

"Great Heaven!" he said to himself, as he tugged at the bell-pull. "The poor fellow is ill—seriously ill, I am afraid, already. Kimberley! The man doesn't know me." A waiter entered the room in answer to the Earl's loud summons. "Run for a doctor," cried his lordship. "This gentleman is unwell.

Send up some one, meanwhile, to assist him to a bedroom. Be as quick as you can."

The man hurried away, and having despatched a messenger in search of a doctor, himself returned with a fellow-servant.

"I've sent for a doctor, my lord," said he. "Can we do anything, my lord?"

"Yes," said his lordship, "you had better assist my friend into my room. It is near at hand, and there is a fire there already."

Kimberley suffered himself to be taken by either arm, and was half led, half carried, into the adjoining apartment, where Windgall, with his own hands, unfastened his coat, waistcoat, and shirt, whilst one of the waiters removed his boots. Kimberley, whose eyes were half closed and sleepy, as if with drink, made no movement of his own initiative, but submitted to everything that was done for him in apparent unconsciousness.

A medical man was readily found, and he, being but young in his West-end practice, was not sorry to be summoned to attend upon a millionnaire in the apartments of the Earl of Windgall. Before his arrival Kimberley was put to bed, and when the doctor entered the sitting-room Windgall was in the act of stowing away the legal documents in the despatch-box. He suspended his task, and accompanied the medico to Kimberley's bedside. A great change had come over the little man already. His face was hot and flushed, his eyes had lost the sleepy and drunken look, and shone unnaturally bright, and he was chattering to himself under his breath at a prodigious pace. The medico felt his pulse, laid a hand upon his forehead, and examined the pupils of his eyes.

"To my personal knowledge," said his lordship in a whisper, "he has been terribly agitated during the last two days. An hour ago he was talking seriously and sensibly, although in great agitation."

"The fever," said the doctor, "has doubtless been incubating for days. A slight cold would serve as a physical basis for it."

"Fever!" said the Earl, drawing back a little. "Is it infectious?"

"It is as yet impossible, my lord," returned the doctor, "to pronounce decisively upon its nature. He should have a skilled nurse at once. There is a Nurses' Institution close at hand. Will you allow me to despatch a note to the Superintendent?"

Windgall supplied him with writing materials, and he penned a brief note and a prescription.

"I will send these at once," he said, "and in two or three

hours' time I will call to see the nurse, and to observe the effect of the prescription. For the present, my lord, I have the honour to wish you a good evening."

Windgall, being left alone, finished the arrangement of the papers, locked them in the despatch-box, in the lock of which Kimberley had left the key, and then walked on tiptoe into the bedroom. The millionnaire was lying with his flushed face and bright eyes turned to the ceiling, and was still talking to himself at the same wild speed as before, but in tones so low that not a single intelligible word reached his lordship's ears, until, on a sudden, he caught the phrase "If I live."

"What was that?" said Windgall. "He said that when he began to break down so suddenly." With half an inward shame he bent over the bed, and inclined his ear. Little by little he pieced the indistinct mutterings together. Over and over again the phrases recurred until he knew them all.

"Put that down. My dearest love and worship. It won't matter when I'm dead. My dearest love and worship. Put that down. Everything to Lady Ella if I die. With dearest love and worship. Put it down. My dearest love and worship."

Windgall crept away again on tiptoe, and sat down in the sitting-room with many strangely-blended thoughts and feelings. Kimberley was mad enough now in all conscience. Had he been sane less than two hours ago when he had insisted upon my lord's reacceptance of that terrible ninety thousand pounds? And could my lord keep the ninety thousand pounds so given? And was the promise to recall Clare binding in case Kimberley died? And if Kimberley died after recovering wits enough to make a will in Lady Ella's favour, would not that after all be the best course events could take? But the grey nobleman was not a monster, and these sordid thoughts were not natural to him. They felt to him like the promptings of some devil of unutterable meanness, who had control over his mental springs, and did what he would with them. He was feeling all the while, too, how gentle and generous a nature Kimberley had revealed, how unselfish and how loyal in his love he was, and how profound and earnest his passion must have been. Well, there was no driving nature in these matters, but surely, in spite of his unpretending exterior, the man had enough of goodness and nobility inside him to have justified a woman's acceptance of him. And the million and a quarter might have gone for something, one would have thought.

The arrival of a nurse, despatched from the neighbouring institution, dispersed these thoughts, and sent Windgall into

new apartments which had already been prepared for him. He sat up until the doctor had visited the patient a second time, and questioned him somewhat eagerly.

"It can't be usual," he said, "for a man to break down so suddenly. A fever can't commonly leap upon a man without warning in that way."

"The patient always has full warning," replied the doctor, "though it may often happen that he will not know what the warning meant."

"He seemed," said Windgall, "to break down in a minute." He hardly liked to put the decisive question which was in his mind.

"You spoke, my lord," said the doctor, "of a great mental agitation. That would supply a stimulus, which would seem to retard, whilst it would actually hasten the progress of the disease. In such a case a man, as they say in athletics, would run himself to a standstill. I have known a man win a race and drop dead on the winning tape. He lived whilst he had to live."

"M-m," said the Earl thoughtfully. "He carried his point before he broke down," he said to himself. "He must have been passionately set upon it. I understand," he said aloud. "You are accustomed to receive confidences in your profession." The doctor bowed. "There is some parallel to that in my friend's case. A great mental strain—a greater strain than I could have conceived it to be—had been removed at the instant at which I noticed his first aberration."

Whilst they were talking thus, and all night long, Kimberley lay staring with bright unwinking eyes at the ceiling, muttering continually.

"Everything to Lady Ella if I die. With dearest love and worship. To Lady Ella. Everything. With dearest love and worship."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

It was a rainy morning at the docks, and the decks of the steamship *Patagonia* were wet and dirty, and bestrewn with a wild variety of packages, great bales in canvas coverings, huge packing-cases, and the hundred component parts of machines of various make, each packed in straw, and a rabble of gentry in long-shore costume made a hideous shindy, with shouting, pulling,

and hauling, in the midst of which a person in blue pilot cloth and a gold-bound cap seemed to swear at large without creating any impression upon anybody. In the middle of the disorder stood Jack Clare, with the collar of a big ulster turned up over his ears, a cloth travelling-cap pulled moodily over his eyes, and his hands in his coat pockets, watching the bestowal of his belongings in the hold. The gold-bound mate looked in his direction now and then, and invariably swore with added gusto afterwards, for he regarded Jack's presence there as being in some sort an intrusion on his manor.

For his part Jack thought nothing of the mate, and knew nothing of his grievance. He came down here every day now, and watched the arrival of his agricultural properties, and of the corrugated zinc farmhouse and outhouses; and he pictured them, sorrowfully enough, as they would be, or might be, about the land he had never seen, and on which, as it seemed, he was to spend the rest of his lifetime.

The one thing that nerved the young fellow in these melancholy hours of preparation for a lifelong exile was the thought that he was going to be of use in the world, and though, in the abstract, this was no doubt a noble sentiment, it was but a poor plaster for a sore heart.

"I'll go and do something," he said to himself a thousand times. "All the Clares sha'n't be poverty-stricken to the end of time. Charley 'll get married, and have a lad or two most likely, and by their time there'll be an estate in New Zealand worth more than the bare acres at home."

But the prospect of benefiting these visionary possible youths helped him less than he expected. He who works for posterity cannot hope to receive his reward to-day. He longed savagely to be actually at work with his own head and hands, where he could tire himself into nightly sleep, and where the daily struggle with nature, as he figured her in those solitudes, would help him little by little to ignore the past.

That ill-advised visit to Shouldershott had taught him one thing which he would have been less wretched not to have known, for he had learned there, beyond his power to doubt, that Ella loved him, and that she, like himself, was condemned to a lonely and loveless life. If in his thoughts about Windgall he was hard and bitter and despiteful, it is not, perhaps, greatly to be wondered at, or very strongly to be condemned. In the creed of young men who are in love, love has a natural right to override everything, and the economies and cares which age suggests look mean to the eyes of a lover. In a case like

Jack Clare's nothing more could be asked than that he should consume his own smoke. This he did, with more than average assiduity, and apart from those who knew the case, nobody fancied the young fellow to be lovelorn, though he was quite taciturn and gloomy enough at this time, and ferociously radical in his opinions. In his own heart he cursed, like the hero of Locksley Hall, the gold that gilded the straightened forehead of the fool, and, of course, the fool was Bolsover Kimberley.

"In a month,"

So poor Jack would quote to himself at times—

"In a month
They wedded her to eighty thousand pounds,
To lands in Kent, and messuages in York,
To slight Sir Robert, with his watery smile
And educated whisker."

He would rail inwardly at Kimberley for not being even the "slight Sir Robert," and denied that most arrant and contemptible of snobs the poor merit even of the educated whisker.

It is not likely that there is any young man in the world who would not have thought it cruel to separate so true a pair of lovers, and to force the lady into a loveless marriage with a man so certain to be repugnant to her. But Clare was in love, and to him this match looked hideous and shameful. The thought of it corroded his soul, and he brooded over it with an indignation so passionate and bitter that he felt at times as if he carried an actual fire within him. It is a hard thing to learn such hatred and disdain, and the careful elders who instruct the young in this wise may have more upon their heads than they know of. To turn generous young blood to gall, and the kindly instincts of a young heart to cynicism, is not a little matter, or one to be lightly thought of. Some of the highest social advantages may be too dearly purchased at such a price.

Somehow the rain and hubbub and discomfort on the *Patagonia's* deck seemed to suit his mood, and he would not have abated any of these small miseries if he had had the power.

"*Patagonia*" cried a voice from the quay, and Jack, looking round with listless eyes, saw a smart-looking messenger with his hand at his mouth to direct the lengthened "ahoy" with which he followed the vessel's name.

"Here," shouted the sullen mate, with a gratuitous execration. "What are you bawling there for?"

"Honourable Captain Clare aboard?" shouted the messenger.

The mate pointed out the honourable Captain Clare with

a sort of bearish politeness extorted by the title, and made up for this concession by swearing with unusual fluency at a lighterman, who, being independent of the mate's good will, swore back again. Whilst the wordy torrents met and raged together the messenger came aboard and tendered to Clare a letter. He saw with amazement that it bore the Windgall crest, and that it was directed in Windgall's hand and marked "immediate."

"It was sent to the hotel, sir," said the messenger touching his hat, "and the manager ordered me to take a cab and come on with it at once."

"H'm," said Jack, and turning his back to the wind and rain opened the envelope and read—

"My dear Clare,

"After the circumstances attendant upon our late meeting you will probably be surprised by the receipt of this letter. I have, however, to tell you (and I may as well do it without circumloction or delay) that circumstances have occurred which enable me to withdraw the opposition I have hitherto been compelled to offer to your union with my daughter. I shall be pleased to see you here at your earliest convenience.

"Yours very truly,

"Windgall."

This epistle was undoubtedly a somewhat odd one, though perhaps his lordship could not have done better if he had taken a twelvemonth to think about it. It had been written, and looked as if it had been written at great haste, and the letters stretched and sprawled over three sides of the sheet of notepaper. As Jack read it he understood it well enough, and yet he could scarcely believe that he understood it at all. He read it two or three times over, and felt stunned, as if he had been smartly rapped on the head with a mallet.

"I'm not mad," he said to himself. "I'm not dreaming. 'Circumstances have occurred which enable me to withdraw the opposition I have hitherto been compelled to offer to your union with my daughter.' Plain black and white. 'I shall be pleased to see you here at your earliest convenience.'"

He hardly dared to believe this astounding intelligence. That the skies should have fallen would have been nothing by comparison with it. He read the letter anew, and his heart began to beat thick with an actual fear, the delusion looked so real. When the impossible happens the man to whom it occurs is apt to feel a little staggered by it to begin with.

"Get me a cab," he said in a quiet and unmoved voice to the

messenger, who touched his cap anew and followed him on shore. "I'll see this through," murmured Jack to himself. "If I am mad I *am* mad. Perhaps I am dead and things are righting themselves in a second world. I don't remember dying, though." He felt a strange wild tendency to laugh, and when he came to the cab by which the messenger had arrived he could not speak for nearly half-a-minute, but stood with bent head as if sunk deep in thought, controlling himself the while.

"Where to, sir?" asked the cabman at last.

Clare opened the letter and re-read the name of the hotel at which Windgall was staying. It cost him a great effort to pronounce it, but he looked no more than dreamy and pre-occupied. Neither cabman nor messenger noted anything as he entered the vehicle and was driven away, but as the first numbed feeling induced by this amazing shock began to disappear his pulses rioted in his heart and head, and he shot such wild conjectures here and there as to the causes which could have induced this change in Windgall's mind that he almost resigned himself to the conclusion that his own mind had fallen into chaos. For had not Windgall hated him this three years past? And was not Ella bound to that dreadful little millionnaire? And was her father the man to relent at any sorrow of hers? Was he not steeped to the heart in sordid thoughts, and by nature incapable of a generous impulse? Was not, in brief, the whole incredible incident the obvious growth of a mind diseased, and could a man with a scrap of sanity left in him yield it credence for a single moment?

"I must believe it," said the disturbed youngster aloud. "I'll believe it till I find it's false."

He sat with his thoughts in a whirl, and by the time at which the cab drew up before the hotel he was as pale as death. It cost him a prodigious effort to ask for Windgall in a way which should not reveal the agitation he suffered, and he felt his hands tremble so much when he essayed to unbutton his overcoat to seek his cardcase that he abandoned that enterprise, and, making shift to say, "Tell his lordship that Captain Clare is here," awaited Windgall's answer in a sort of desperation. Out of this grew a sudden coolness and self-possession, which lasted until the servant returned.

"This way, sir." Jack's heart began to beat again, and he could scarce see the way along the broad and well-lit corridor. "This way, sir," said the servant a second time, and threw open a door. The young man entered almost blindly, and heard the Earl's voice with an odd tremor in it.

"Good morning, Clare. Good morning. Wild weather, but not unseasonable for the time of year." His lordship was shaking Jack by the hand.

"I received your note," said the younger man, who saw his lordship's grey features as if through a silvery fog, "and I came here at once."

"So I see," said the Earl. "Be seated." The servant had closed the door, and his retreating footsteps sounded clearly. Jack obeyed his lordship's injunction, and the silvery fog began to clear away. "I have no doubt," said his lordship, approaching the centre table, and beginning to push about the trifles which lay upon it. "I have no doubt that you were surprised by the receipt of my note?"

"I was surprised, my lord, certainly," said Jack, not as yet knowing well what to say, or what to think.

"You must allow me to go back a little while," his lordship said nervously. "When I requested you, nearly three years ago, to allow your intimate and friendly visits at the Castle to cease for a time, I spoke in my daughter's interest and your own. You naturally thought my conduct a little brutal and self-interested. Young men think such things of their elders. We see things from different stand-points, and in thirty years from now you will be readier to take my side than I can expect you to be at present."

He paused, as if expecting a reply, probably a negative, but Jack merely nodded to him to continue. He did not see the sign, for he was still nervously pushing about the trifles on the table, but he went on again.

"I will not even say that if—in the existing circumstances—I had known at the time that my daughter's affections were engaged in your behalf—I will not say that even then I should have been disposed to encourage your suit. Young people form attachments, and set their hearts upon unions"—he floundered somewhat awkwardly—"attachments which are unfortunate, and unions which are impossible. And even if I had known that Ella's wishes were as deeply concerned as your own I am not sure that I could have consented. I am almost sure that I should still have felt it my duty to persuade her to a wiser view."

Still Jack made no response, and after another nervous pause the Earl continued.

"In spite of what I have said already, Clare, I shall ask you to believe that I love my daughter. If I had been a wealthy man—if I had been anything but a very poor man—you would

have been welcome to continue your addresses. If you had been wealthy, or if I had been wealthy, (it would have made no difference to me from which side the money came,) I would have given my consent to the proposals you made to me. But I have suffered from poverty all my life, and I know its bitternesses, its humiliations. You may accept it as a proof of the feeling with which I regard you that I tell you these things. They are not easy things to speak of."

"I am obliged to your lordship for the confidence you are pleased to place in me," said Jack, opening his lips for the second time since his entrance to the room.

"But," said his lordship, looking up and looking down again, "you naturally ask to what does all this lead? Well, I am going to be perfectly frank and candid with you. I did not know, and I had no reason given me to suspect, that Ella was suffering from any sentimental distresses on account of the decision at which I had felt myself compelled to arrive. Even if I had known that she had taken my decision to heart I am not sure, as I have said already, that I should have been the more disposed to yield. But I should have stood firm, not because I am a heartless father, or insensible to my child's welfare, but because I have learned some little wisdom in a harder school than she or you have known."

"Your letter tells me," Jack began, when the Earl paused, "that circumstances have occurred——"

"I will not tell you what those circumstances are precisely," said Windgall. "I do not know if I have a right to tell you. Some day I may be able to lay them all before you, but at present they involve a secret which I have no right to reveal. It must be enough that they have occurred. I have learned that my daughter's happiness, if not actually bound up with your own, is likely to be affected—— I do not find it easy to talk of these things, Clare."

"Have I your permission, my lord," said Jack, standing up suddenly, "to renew my addresses to Lady Ella?"

"That is really the question," said his lordship, advancing with his right hand outstretched. "You have my full permission, and I wish you and her long life and happiness with all my heart."

Jack grasped the extended hand in so unconventional a manner that his lordship's fingers felt as if glued together for a full minute after their release.

"Thank you," he said, with a little catch in his voice, "Thank you, my lord. Can I see Ella? Is she in town?"

His heart felt almost drowned in this tide of joy, which poured so suddenly on the desert of his griefs. "I am afraid I have thought hard thoughts about you, sir," he stammered. "I beg your pardon for them."

"Ella," said Windgall, rubbing his hands together in a fashion that looked cordial, but was only intended to restore the circulation to his stiffened fingers, "Ella is at Gallowbay. I have wired to her this morning, asking her to join me here. If you care to dine with us this evening——?"

"Thank you," cried Jack once more. "My lord," he hurried on humbly, "I don't know how to thank you. I don't know how to ask your pardon for all the mistaken thoughts I have had about you."

"Tut, tut," said my lord, with a transient shamefacedness. "I acted for the best."

He was mightily relieved up to now to find that Jack asked no questions about Kimberley; but he was still nervous lest the topic should be broached. The lover had thought of Kimberley also; but, even now, he could hardly bear to couple his name in the same mental breath with Ella's, and it was enough for the present to know that, however it had come about, that shameful match was broken off, and Ella released from the prospect of that awful life-long slavery.

"And now," said Windgall, with some little awkwardness still remaining, "may I ask you to leave me to some business of extreme importance, which I am afraid," looking at his watch, "I can really delay no longer." He gave his prospective son-in-law his hand. "Be as fervent as you like," he was enforced to say on withdrawing it, "but you are a little stronger than you know, I fancy. Don't forget this evening. Half-past seven. And now, good-bye."

Jack blushed and stammered like a schoolboy, and escaped he scarce knew how. His forgotten cabman hailed him as he came upon the pavement, and he leaped into the vehicle and commanded the driver to his hotel, where he locked himself in his own room and paced up and down elated. He stretched out his arms as if Ella could fly to them.

"No more grief, dear; no more pain. My dear, my dear."

By-and-by he grew a little calmer, and sat down with that contraband portrait he had kept so long, and gazed at it with tear-dimmed eyes until he was fain to fall upon his knees, remembering the things his mother had taught him, and thank God for Ella's rescue and the new happiness of his own lot. But this is scarcely within the storyteller's province, to my mind.

"My dear Ella," said his lordship, in answer to her troubled inquiry at Euston, where he met her, "there was no cause for any alarm in my despatch. Altogether, I have reason to believe that you will find the circumstances in which I have summoned you to town very agreeable and satisfactory. Tollgett and Priscilla will see to your baggage. Alice is already in the carriage. When we reach the hotel I shall want to speak to you. I have altogether very happy news." He was excited, and Ella could scarcely help thinking that his news was less happy than he proclaimed it to be. "Especially happy news for you, my dear," he half whispered, as he led her to the carriage.

She did not quite know what news could be especially happy for her to hear. She had resigned herself to hear no news of her own affairs which could seem happy, and she did not greatly trouble herself to understand the meaning of her father's words. But when they had reached the hotel he contrived that he and Ella should be alone for a while, and he stooped and kissed her as she sat before the fire with folded hands.

"My dear," he said, in a voice which betrayed some agitation, "you must look your best this evening. I have invited Captain Clare to dinner."

He had scarcely spoken when he blamed himself for this precipitation, though even then he scarcely saw how he could have softened the intelligence he had to offer. He could not understand that it was the complete uncertainty of its meaning rather than the simple intelligence itself which so agitated his daughter. Her cheeks became deadly pale, and for a moment he thought she was about to swoon, but she controlled herself with a great effort and sat silent and trembling.

"You will be pleased to see him, dear?" he asked, when he saw the colour stealing back to her cheek. At this query she blushed divinely, but she smiled also, and he stooped again to kiss her on the forehead. There was a strong feeling of compunction and pity in his heart as he did so, for he thought how long for his own selfish reasons he had made this best of daughters unhappy, and with how profound a sense of duty she had obeyed him. For he knew, now, something of the sense of heartbreak she had suffered, and though he had never been the man to feel that kind of grief acutely, or to sympathise with it keenly, he was not cruel or hard-hearted, and he loved her after all. "I saw him this morning," Windgall continued, "and I told him formally that so far as I was concerned I withdrew all opposition to his suit. I have been mistaken, all

along, my dear," he went on, with a huskiness in his voice and a moisture in his eyes. "I never meant to be cruel to you."

"No, no," she answered, rising and hiding her blushing face beside his. "I am sure of that."

He put his right arm about her waist, and she set an arm around his neck, and in that way they walked up and down the room together for a little while, as Windgall spoke.

"There is a thing I have not yet been able to tell Captain Clare. No, don't be alarmed, Ella. There is nothing more to come between you. But there is a thing I have not been able to tell him, and I must ask you not to tell him either, though I have not only a right to let you know it, but feel it a sort of duty. You remember the documents poor Kimberley so nobly offered me? We mistook him. I mistook him. The noblest and the most generous heart——" He paused a little in his speech and in his walk, but resumed both together. "When he discovered how distasteful he was to you, and became quite certain in his own mind that you could not possibly be happy with him, he came to tell me so, as you know already. Then, as you know already, I sent the papers back to him. He had proposed to make a wedding bonfire of them, and of course I could not keep them after what had happened. He followed me here to London, and brought the papers with him. He absolutely refused to accept them, and I as absolutely refused to retain them."

Once before in this history Lord Windgall made a statement of this kind, a statement not purely veracious. In that instance, as in this, he was unconscious of deception, and he really thought that he had made his refusal absolute.

"He told me," his lordship continued, "that he had been an involuntary witness of your parting with Captain Clare." At this Ella started and blushed, and half withdrew her arm. Even when she had restored it her father noticed a difference in her gait, a something which spoke of wounded reserve and of indignation. "He was at that moment on his way to see me, and to tell me the conclusion at which he had arrived. He told me this, and when I gave the papers back to him he threatened me. It was the most magnanimous threat I ever heard, my dear. He told me that if I would not give my consent to your marriage with Captain Clare, he would put every one of the documents in force next day. But he cried out a moment later that he had never meant to threaten me, and implored me to take them as a wedding gift, and remove the barrier which stood between you and the man of your choice.

And so, my dear," he continued hurriedly, "I had no choice but to yield, and—and the papers were destroyed, were burned."

"Papa," she said gravely, and even sorrowfully. "How could you take them?"

"I felt that," cried Windgall, eagerly. "But I could not refuse them. He would take no nay. He insisted. A man who won't take money from another can't be forced into taking it."

After that, seeing into what an easily escapable pitfall he had fallen, he was dumb for a minute.

"That was awkwardly expressed, of course," he began again, with an uneasy laugh. "He had the power to refuse and I had not. My dear, we have all been mistaken in the man. He has the noblest, the most generous, the tenderest, the most chivalrous heart." The withered nobleman was honestly moved as he spoke these words. "There is one thing I must tell you, dear, though it may dash your joy a little. You ought to know it, for it can't all be merry-making here at this time, with no memory of the man who gave us the right to be happy. You may not think much of poor Kimberley's heart, my dear, but it was all yours. He lies here now, in the same hotel, ill of brain fever, and in great danger, as the doctors fear. And he has never spoken a word since he lost consciousness that did not relate to you. 'If I die,' he says continually, poor fellow, 'If I die, everything is to go to Lady Ella, with dearest love and worship.' That is all the poor stricken creature thinks about." An actual tear trickled down the grey face and dropped on Ella's hand, for his lordship was a good deal moved by his own eloquence by this time. "He says that always without ceasing, and he says nothing else. I pray God, with all my heart, that he may live for many a year, and be as happy as he deserves to be."

This story touched the girl profoundly. These things are hard to find, but, perhaps, now that she knew all the devotion of the heart she had despised, if there had been no such man as Jack Clare in the world, she might have resigned herself to marry even the poor little Bolsover Kimberley. She was free of him now, and free to pity him. If Kimberley could ever have known of the tears she shed over this pathetic story, and the thoughts she thought of him, he would have been more than consoled, a proud and happy man for ever.

What are externals after all, when heart really comes within reach of heart? What did it matter to have been a lawyer's clerk, and to have been cursed with an exterior of foolish meekness, and to have been ill-bred and full of gaucheries, when, after all, this patrician lady whom he loved so tenderly, could

shed tears of pity for him, and could come near to loving him, if even for a moment only?

But it is rare to meet with one's deserts in this world, and Kimberley never knew of these things.

CHAPTER XXIX.

If Ella had a tear or two to bestow on Kimberley's sorrows, it was still natural that she should remember her own good fortune, and the happiness which lay before her and her lover. There really are people in the world, however much the pessimist may be disposed to disbelieve it, whose only road to happiness lies through the happiness of others, and Ella thought a great deal more of seeing her lover happy than of her own content. The sweet and only half-conscious egotism which assured her that it was in her power to make him happy furnished her with a rich reward for all the sorrows of the past. The thought never once crossed her mind, "Now I am going to be happy!" but that other thought, infinitely more delightful, "Now Jack will be happy!" made very music in her heart. It is not unreasonable, surely, that at times events should be so ordered, that this sort of unselfish and generous nature should be happier than any selfish nature has the power to be.

So if over poor Kimberley some natural tears she shed, she dried them soon, and when Alice saw her a half-hour later, she was amazed at her radiant and tender looks. It must needs be sorrowful that so good a creature as the little Bolsover had after all proved to be should suffer as he suffered, but it must needs be a glad thing that her hero and man of men was saved from loveless exile, and that after all the rainy days he had known the sun was at last to shine upon him. Perhaps in the course of this history it has never been made quite clear that Jack was much of a hero, but it might go hard with Lady Ella's suitor if it were imperatively demanded that he should be in all respects worthy of her. Goodness is not the sole prerogative of women. There are manly virtues which few women own, but women are better than we are, and there are few amongst us who are really worthy of a good woman's love. A good woman is beyond rubies. Think of her life—how pure and blameless! Set your own beside it, and you can scarce do less than feel a twinge of shame. It is a thousand to one that you show like a raven on a snow-bank. In that tender domestic purity we have

all seen and known there is something almost terrible, and the angel of the flaming sword might well seem to stand between us and it, warning us back from a trespass on that paradise of goodness.

But Ella was at least provided with a husband, chaste, honourable, and manly, and in this imperfect world perhaps even the best sort of women could scarcely ask for more. Jack, awaiting the happy moment when he should rejoin her, could as yet hardly find it in his heart to credit his own good fortune, and certainly never presumed for a moment to think himself worthy of it. But the whole thing at present was a wonder and a miracle. The cruellest of conceivable fates had changed, without a moment's warning, into the happiest. That wicked ogre of an Earl had suddenly become a good father, with his daughter's welfare the one thing nearest to his heart, and the Kimberley goblin had somehow vanished into the outer darkness, had made himself air, like the foul figures in *Macbeth*.

Jack was attired cap-à-pie a good three hours before the time appointed, and paced his room like a prisoner awaiting the moment of release. Half an hour before he dared presume to start, he despatched a waiter for a cab, and he looked at his watch a thousand times at a moderate computation. Before this, the weather had cleared pretty much as his own prospects had done, and the gas-lit streets lay under a clear sky, with rosy clouds of sunset in it; London smoke made glorious beyond human imagination. As he drove to Windgall's hotel the young man surveyed the passengers on either side the road and blessed them unaware.

When he arrived at the hotel and was ushered into Windgall's sitting-room, he found himself alone for a moment. A clear fire was burning on the hearth, and one shaded lamp shed a soft and rosy twilight upon the half-darkness of the chamber. The curtains were close drawn, and to his fancy there was something home-like in the room. His heart was beating high with a flattered sense of expectancy when the door opened and Ella entered alone. She advanced with a hand frankly stretched towards him, and he took it in both his own, and bent over it as if he were a pilgrim at a shrine, and kissed it reverently. Then still holding it in both his own he drew her gently to the hearth-rug, where the softened light of the lamp and the glow of the fire met together, and could fall upon her face. A woman is never so beautiful as in the eyes of her lover, and lovely as she was his love spiritualised her beauty. She seemed scarcely mortal to him, and he looked at her with

much such a reverence and tender awe as one might feel in the presence of an angel. But she was all woman, too, and as he looked the hand he held was drawn closer and closer, and the lovely face came nearer and nearer, until at last his lips touched hers, and he set both arms around her and drew her to his heart. There was no need of question or reply just then, for they each knew the other's heart already.

Ella disengaged herself from his embrace, but he took her by both unresisting hands and held her, looking into her eyes, until brave as they were they drooped before him in a pleased confusion, and then he found audacity enough to take her to his arms again.

It was full a minute before either of them spoke, and then said Jack, looking down into her eyes,

"Are you happy, dear?"

"And you?" she answered with delightful *naïveté*, "Are you happy, too?"

"Happy?" cried Jack with a sort of scorn of the word, and he must needs kiss her once more, as if kissing were the only possible channel of communication. "I can't believe that I am here," he said, when she had again escaped from him. "I feel as if it were all a dream. I am afraid of awaking." She shook her head with a shy and radiant smile. "How did it all come about, dear?" he asked her. "How was the miracle accomplished? I was eating my heart this morning, and it was as bitter as gall. And only half a dozen hours later I find myself in heaven. Who has done it all?"

"You must ask papa," said Ella.

"He found out that you cared for me?" said Jack, "that you —loved me? You do care for me, a little? It isn't mere mad vanity and insolence in me to think so? I don't think it is vanity or insolence, my darling. I never felt so humble. I never felt so unworthy."

She was once more a purely angelic presence to him, and he abased himself in spirit before her. He knelt to her and kissed both her hands.

"And yet you do care for me a little?" he asked her with returning courage.

"Yes," she answered, with a low ripple of happy laughter in her voice. "A little."

His lordship of Windgall, who had the good taste to be attacked with a rather severe fit of coughing at the moment at which he opened the door, appeared at this juncture, and Jack scrambled somewhat hastily and guiltily to his feet, and there

seemed to both these young people a something sly and underhanded in the attempt to hide altogether the character of the interview which had taken place between them, and so when my lord entered, he found them still standing, in spite of the signal he had given, hand in hand before the fireplace. If there had been light enough for him to observe by he would have seen that both of them were blushing in a way which in one case was singularly becoming, and in the other rather sheepish. For it has been ordained by Nature that under this sort of conditions, the maid shall look more than mortal sweet and charming, and the man a trifle ridiculous.

"This is Captain Clare, papa," said Lady Ella, and Captain Clare, relinquishing her hands, proffered his own right hand to Windgall.

"Nothing will afford me greater pleasure than to shake hands with Captain Clare," said his lordship laughing. "But, Clare, as you are strong be merciful."

Jack blushed and laughed in answer, but shook hands in a manly and straightforward way, and Windgall returned the pressure with a seeming cordiality. Perhaps it was not in human nature to be actually cordial all at once with a man who robbed him of so excellent a son-in-law as Kimberley would have been, but the Earl made at least a creditable struggle. First impressions are sometimes difficult to overcome, but his lordship had thoroughly vanquished his first beliefs in Kimberley, and was, after the ordinary manner of human nature, much more disposed to value him now that he had lost him than he had ever been before. This natural tendency was strengthened by the fact that he had only really begun to value that despised prospective son-in-law of his when the little man had come to deal the death-blow to his own dearest hopes. But Windgall saw now clearly enough what he had lost, and to do him no more than justice his regret for the millionnaire's money was no stronger than his sense of the millionnaire's more personal possessions.

He had been trying hard all the afternoon to persuade himself that things had happened for the best, and even in the unhappiest light his moods could throw upon the history of his daughter's love affairs, they still looked almost sufficiently prosperous. He himself stood clear of debt, and he could settle a couple of thousand a year upon Ella and still be more than two thousand five hundred pounds a year richer than he had ever been in his life before. He knew the amount of Clare's recent windfall, and supposed the young gentleman's private income to

amount to something like fifteen hundred pounds. Now, even with the addition he proposed to make to it from his own poor resources, the income of Ella's future husband looked very poor indeed beside Kimberley's annual fifty or sixty thousand pounds, but his lordship bethought him—being anxious now to make the best of everything—that he had always voted straight with his party, and had been not altogether useless in other ways to his political chieftains, that having no sons of his own, he had never had occasion to ask a favour in his life, and with the influence on which he could fairly count, in combination with Captain Clare's brother, Lord Montacute, the young gentleman might be hoisted into some place of emolument and honour, which would make him not so poor a match for Ella after all. Captain Clare had certainly been guilty of a public indiscretion at the last Gallowbay election, and had deserted the traditional politics of his family, but he was young, and that false step might easily be condoned if he would consent in his future doings to be guided by the voice of experience and reason. And perhaps it had been no more than natural, my lord allowed, in his new-found anxiety to think the best of Jack Clare, that the young man should have been stung by the pangs of despised love, into the expression of those ill-considered Radical opinions. To my lord's natural way of thinking, a Radical was an interested person who wanted something which was out of reach, and now that Jack had what he wanted, it was easy to suppose that he would return to the faith of his fathers.

None of these considerations presented themselves to the lover's mind as he sat in heavenly blessedness at the same table with Ella. He ate but little, being content to feed his eyes and heart, but what he ate was like manna to him, a food sublimated and refined. Ella and Alice, Windgall and Clare, made a very quiet party, and Jack's replies to his host's observations were sometimes altogether out of joint. Windgall had more to say than anybody else at table, but even he was often a little silent and self-absorbed in spite of himself, and Alice, as it turned out afterwards, was observing her sister and the visitor, and forming opinions of her own.

For when the two sisters were alone together after dinner, the sagacious young observer stole to her sister's side, and without apparent provocation kissed her. Young ladies do not usually blush beneath a salute of this sort from sisterly lips, and yet Ella's clear cheek took a rare tint of carmine.

"I always thought," said Alice, "that there was somebody else, and I always thought it was——"

At this point Ella kissed her back again, and the confidence was either lost, or held to be unnecessary.

Meanwhile, in the dining-room my lord and his guest were engaged in serious talk. Windgall lit a cigar, but Jack, ordinarily an egregious smoker, for some reason of his own declined tobacco. It is undeniable that tobacco smoke clings to the moustache, and the young man was not as yet, perhaps, altogether certain of Lady Ella's approval of the odour.

"Clare," said my lord, "I want to have a serious talk with you." Jack nodded gravely, and drew his chair a little nearer to the table. "I am not able to give my daughter a great portion, and you are not a wealthy man. It is best to be candid in these matters, and I am sure I can speak to you quite openly."

"Assuredly," said the lover.

"I don't know as yet," resumed Windgall, "what provision I shall be able to make for her, but in any case it will not be large."

"It is a question, my lord," cried Jack, "that has never entered my thoughts."

"Let it enter now," said Windgall, in an almost sportive manner. "As a matter of fact—and matters of fact deserve to be looked at, even when one is going to be married—this is a dreadfully improvident marriage on both sides, and if you young people had properly understood your own interests, you would each have fallen in love with somebody who had a little money." He spoke quite laughingly, but Jack was so persuaded that he believed he was speaking the truth, that he could secure no smiling answer for him, but toyed seriously with a pair of nutcrackers and attempted no reply. "Of course," pursued his lordship, "that is a very heathen sentiment, and is not at all likely to recommend itself to you. But still the fact remains that in a worldly sense both Ella and yourself might have chosen more wisely. We elderly people, you know, Clare, get into a way of thinking that in right of our experience we ought to be allowed to have things our own way, but you impetuous youngsters beat us, and we have to accept defeat with the best grace we can command. You must allow experience to have a word, however. Let us make the best of things. And to begin with, let me ask you what is your financial position?"

"My income," Jack answered, "is a trifle, a mere trifle, over fifteen hundred a year."

"Well," said my lord, "you know what that is to a man in our position. It means poverty—actual poverty—poverty bitter

and galling. I can give Ella enough to double that sum,—perhaps even a little more, but it still means poverty."

"You are very generous, my lord," said the lover. "But fifteen hundred a year does not necessarily mean poverty."

"No!" said his lordship, lifting his grey eyebrows with a smile half-pitying and half-satirical. "It will pay rent and taxes if you choose to house yourself moderately. You are not so simple as to suppose that you can resign everything to which your position entitles you. No, no. With three thousand a year you will still be poor, but you will not want to be idle and unoccupied, and I suppose you have ambitions, as most young men of parts have. I had ambitions myself once on a time, but I did what you are doing, Clare,—I made an improvident marriage, a love match, and they dropped away from me. I was blessed with the best of wives, and I never regretted my marriage except for my children's sake. But poverty is a dreadful clog, a dreadful clog. It drags the life out of everything."

"I am not afraid of poverty," said Jack, "either for myself or for Lady Ella."

"Nor was I," said Windgall. "I defied it with a light heart, and I have borne it for many a year with a heavy one. But this is apart from what I meant to say. You have talents, as I know. I suppose you have ambitions?"

"Yes," said Jack, "I have ambitions of a sort."

"The posts at the disposal of private patronage are fewer than they were," said the Earl, "but everything is not yet handed over to the demon of Public Competition. I have some little influence. I have never asked a favour in my life, and my long service will count for something. Your brother has influence also. We must combine our forces and find you a post, and you must exert yourself for your own advancement. I speak with no fatherly partiality when I say that such a wife as my daughter will be, will be of the utmost value in such a struggle. She is fitted for social distinction, and will secure it."

Jack sat silent for two or three minutes, scarce knowing how to begin to break ground.

"You are very kind indeed, my lord," he said at last, "but I am afraid you have not taken my politics into account." The Earl actually groaned at this. "Your friends will prefer to keep what places they have to bestow for those who share their opinions, and can be useful to them."

"My dear Clare," said Windgall. "What is the game of

politics as played in England, or anywhere for that matter? Is there anything in it at all, but just enough to keep the masses occupied with public affairs, and to find the people of better breeding an honourable occupation? Does anybody—except here and there an uncultured stupid person in the country, and here and there a hot-headed fanatic—believe that Gladstone is a demon or Disraeli a demigod, or think Gladstone demigod and Disraeli demon? Does anybody *believe*, as a solid matter of fact, that the country is happier or more prosperous under one government than under another? We make a prodigious fuss, of course, as to who shall be in and who shall be out. That is part of the game, and it finds the masses something in which they can take an interest, but to think of taking it in earnest between ourselves is really a little absurd. When the Tories are in the tide rolls out, when the Liberals are in the tide rolls up. The tide rises and the tide falls, and we make a noise about it every time, and bring out our mops to help it up or keep it down, and somehow in a kind of way we succeed in persuading ourselves for the moment that we have quite an important effect upon it."

He spoke very lightly, and with a certain air of humour, but he looked keenly once or twice at Jack as if to gauge the effect of his speech upon him. The young man still played seriously with the nutcrackers, and seemed to examine them with an attention altogether unnecessary.

"I am afraid," he said, when Windgall paused, "that I take a somewhat more serious view of politics than your lordship."

"Well, come now," returned Windgall with a voice of badinage, "you don't tell me that in cool reason you abide by the proclamations of Gallowbay. You fluttered the Tory dovecote, and I assure you that nobody admired the dash and vigour of your speeches more than I. There was a certain happy audacity in them which really reminded one of what one reads of Disraeli in his younger days. They were capital, and I had a laugh at my own expense on more than one occasion I assure you. But in cool blood now, Clare, you are scarcely so undaunted a political fire-eater? Confess it."

"I was guilty of a good deal of bad taste, my lord," Jack confessed with a blush, "but in the main I spoke my honest opinions. If I disappoint you now, I am extremely sorry. There is scarcely anything else in which I shall not be proud to allow you to command me."

"Well, well," said Windgall, who was more angry than he cared to show. "I can't ask you to be false to any profound

convictions. But if the convictions should turn out not to be so very profound after all (and to my way of thinking there is no need for any very profound political convictions in a country like England), there might be a career opened for you which would find full scope for an honourable ambition. Think it over, Clare, think it over. For the present we may leave it. Discussion never converted anybody. It only indurates opinion, and makes each of the disputants more obstinately attached to his own particular crotchet. Leave the thing alone, and I may come to your opinion or you may come to mine. There is a sort of satisfaction in converting oneself, and a sort of scorn of being converted by anybody else. Shall we go back to the drawing-room?"

Jack would honestly have preferred to tell him that there was no likelihood of his changing his mind in this respect, but set a check upon himself. It would be easy to say all he had to say upon the matter when the Earl returned to the subject. In the mind of the younger man there was a grave disapproval of the elder's flippancy, and a day or two earlier the sentiments to which he had listened would have served to confirm him in that base opinion of Windgall which he had held so long. But in Ella's presence it was hard to think ill of Ella's father, and he soon brought himself to forgive his lordship's want of political fervour. The thought of politics fled his mind as he sat down by the side of his sweetheart. Delightful old word. A little out of fashion perhaps with the people who write of the love affairs of ladies and gentlemen nowadays, but still delightful.

They spent a wonderfully quiet evening. Alice sat at the piano for a time and played dreamy music, and his lordship had little to say for himself, and by-and-by withdrew, leaving the three young people together for a delicious quarter of an hour. No lady of her years would have been expected to have been more discreet than Alice at this happy juncture, and she sat womanfully at the piano and left the lovers perfectly to themselves until Windgall's return. Jack made prisoner of one of the beautiful slender hands and kissed it now and again, but they spoke scarcely a word between them, and were content simply with each other's presence, and that common sense of ownership which lovers find so exquisitely flattering to the heart. And of course their past sorrow made them happier now, and even tranquillised their joy a little.

My lord returning put an end to this *tête-à-tête*, in which the eyes had done all or nearly all the talking, and the four settled round the fire like a veritable family party, until at last Jack

had to go, and to be satisfied with a merely formal leave-taking. But he seemed to walk on air, and the early winter night in the sloppy London streets was like a spring morning in Arcadia to him.

Yet when he gave himself time to think of them, the hopes and anticipations Windgall had expressed began to trouble him not a little, and he was forced to look at his own prospects. A life of idleness, even with Ella to share it, was by no means to his mind, and indeed the more he thought of her the more he recognised the necessity of a life of usefulness. The young fellow, in short, took his high good fortune loftily, and determined not to be unworthy of it. It was possible enough, as Montacute had told him long ago, that his love affairs had influenced his political opinions, but it was certain that his political opinions had left a considerable impression on his character. Windgall's proposal was frankly and flatly impossible—a thing there could be no two thoughts about in his own mind. He was resolved to be honest and to be of some service in the world. It was easy to be honest, but it was hard to see in what way he could be of use. Could he drag Ella out into that half-wild new world, and ask her to share his life there? To him, with long thinking of it, it had come to seem the noblest and most useful life open to him, to subdue nature, to train the rough, shaggy forest into smooth smiling fields of harvest, to be one in the great crowd of men who would by-and-by cheapen bread for the hungry millions of the world. A practical honest hope, and, as he thought it, a high practical duty. A work thoroughly fit for him whilst he stood alone, but how about it now with this more delicate life in charge?

It took him some days to come to a definite opinion on this matter, but at last he determined to consult Ella herself upon it, and to abide by her judgment. Whilst this inward discussion went on the *Patagonia* sailed without him, but the practical man he had engaged to look after his affairs went with her, and Jack started away to appeal to Ella. Calling at his hotel by the way, he ran against Major Heard in the vestibule, and noticed on the grisly warrior's face an expression of wrath and severity.

"Ah!" said the Major, "the very man I wanted. You know nothing about it yet? You haven't heard?"

Now Jack had seemed so long detested of the Fates that his heart sank a little at the Major's face and voice.

"I have heard nothing," he said. "Nothing at all. What is it?"

"Well, it's confoundedly unpleasant," said the Major. "We'd better go up-stairs to your own room and talk it over."

Jack led the way, and when they were once closeted together, the Major drew out of his coat-pocket a copy of *The Way of the World*, and indicating Mr. Amelia's brilliant article with an outstretched forefinger, handed it to his companion.

"Read that, sir," said the Major. "That fellow Kimberley is the proprietor of this journal. Money won't matter to him, confound him! But there is plenty of material there for a criminal proceeding, and I should think he's good for a year or two."

The Major stood pulling at his moustache with first one hand and then the other, and watched Jack's face, on which an expression mixed of wrath and wonder gathered as he read.

CHAPTER XXX.

"THE scoundrel!" cried Jack, when he had finished Mr. Amelia's masterpiece. "The villain!" He crumbled the paper in both hands and faced the Major. "You have read it all?"

"Every word," replied the Major. "The fellow has given himself into your hands. Don't be any angrier about it than you can help. Do you notice the odd thing about it? All the villainies charged against you were actually committed by that fellow Stracey or Bracey, or whatever his name was. You remember *him?* They've taken his biography and tacked it on to you. That's all."

"The scoundrel!" cried Jack again.

It came easy to suppose that "that fellow Kimberley," as the Major called him, was a person capable of any degraded action. What, indeed, might be expected from an ill-bred fellow, sprung from the lowest ranks of life, who had defeated one of these gentlemen in a parliamentary contest, and had outbid the other for the matrimonial prize? But neither Major Heard nor Jack Clare had hitherto charged him with anything so bad as this. What was said of Clare was simply and purely absurd—the slightest breath would blow that away for good and all—but it was the attack on Lady Ella which betrayed the dark spot in the discarded lover's heart.

"You don't know why his lordship got rid of him?" asked the Major.

"No," said Jack. "I never asked." Of course so old and

close a friend as the Major knew all the young man's happy news. "He told me enough to make me understand that he had found out how unhappy she was."

"Found him out in some confounded snobbery, and gave him his discharge at once, most probably," said the Major. "Windgall was always poor, but he was never a dishonourable man. It was always a matter of wonder to me, poor as he was, that he ever brought himself to consent for a moment to such a match. You may depend upon it," said the Major, nodding sapiently, "that Windgall found him out and sent him packing, and that he imagined this in revenge. Of course the little skunk couldn't write it himself. That other little rascal, that Amelia, used to write his speeches for him."

So limited a thing is earthly fame, in spite of the most assiduous puffing, that neither Jack nor the Major knew of Mr. Amelia's connection with *The Way of the World.*

"To talk about the vindication of your own character in a case of this kind," pursued the Major, "would be absurd, because nobody is at all likely to believe this bundle of lies. But you must punish the scoundrel too. What do you think of doing, to begin with?"

"I hardly know," said Jack. "I ought to see Windgall at once, I suppose, but it is an unpleasant thing to do. If this shameless thing came to Lady Ella's ears——." He could not speak for mingled rage and shame.

"Go and see Windgall," said the Major. I remember a case something like this, when *The Scourge* fell foul of Collard of the Sixteenth. It was stopped the first day because they hadn't 'proved publication,' as they call it. I'll go down to the office of this confounded paper, sir, and I'll see the editor, and tell him in your name that you intend to institute criminal proceedings. I am not altogether ignorant of the proper way to go about these things. I'll buy a paper, and I'll tell him what I'm buying it for. The law lays down certain rules in these matters. You do the same if you want anything analysed. You go and see Windgall. I'll go and see the editor."

The Major put on his glasses and hunted over the copy of *The Way of the World* for the address of the publisher, and having found it, handed the paper to Clare, folded his glasses, resumed his hat and gloves, and with a more than usually military gait, departed. The Major was essentially warlike, and the stern joy that warriors feel illumined his bosom, and made his self-imposed task almost a pleasure to him, notwithstanding his anger and contempt.

The office of *The Way of the World* was situated in a retired court off the Strand, and he had some little difficulty in finding it. He entered with majestic calm, and demanded of the stalwart Scottish graduate, who sat in a screened corner writing, the whereabouts of the editor.

"Oblige me with your name, sir," said the courteous secretary. "I'll see if he is within."

The Major produced a card and handed it to the Scot, who slid sedately into the inner room, and having closed the door behind him presented the piece of pasteboard to his chief. Mr. Amelia sat in the little revolving chair at his customary desk, with by no means his customary air of crisp assurance. As a matter of fact Mr. Webling—though it has taken some time to bring up the other side of the narrative to this point—had but just left the office after the delivery of his awful news, and Mr. Amelia was a good deal unnerved by his disclosures. He took the card abstractedly, but he jumped when he saw the name.

"Tell him," he said with a manner which was in strange contrast with his ordinary crisp self-assertiveness, "that I am particularly engaged. Tell him to write."

The private secretary returned with this message to Major Heard.

"Tell him," said the Major, who had no remotest idea as yet of the editor's personality, "that I desire to see him personally, and at once."

The private secretary returned to Mr. Amelia with this message.

"I can't see him," said the editor, almost with a groan. "I won't see him." Nobody would have been less welcome than Major Heard at any moment, and that he should appear now before Mr. Amelia had had time to gather his shattered wits from the shock Webling had given them was quite dreadful. "Tell him he must write."

With good-humoured simple courtesy the secretary came back again.

"Tell the editor," said Major Heard, "that I insist upon seeing him." He spoke in a raised voice, and the editor hearing him, rumpled his upstanding hair with both hands and moaned. "Tell him that I will not go until I have seen him."

"He is really very busily engaged, sir," said the secretary.

"The business on which I have to speak to him," said Major Heard, "is much more important to him than anything on which he is likely to be engaged at present. Oblige me by telling him that I insist upon an interview."

There was no need for the secretary to deliver this last message, for the Major's voice was very warlike and distinct, and every syllable had reached the editor's ears.

"Show him in," said Mr. Amelia, springlessly.

The Major entered with his eye-glass stuck fiercely in his right eye, and glaring round beheld Mr. Amelia in the revolving chair. The secretary had closed the door, and was back in the screened corner again. Seeing Mr. Amelia, the Major started.

"Eh?" he said, his fierce expression merging into a sardonic smile. "So *you* are the editor of this precious publication, are you?"

"May I ask the nature of your business?" said Mr. Amelia, with a feeble effort to assume his customary manner.

A copy of *The Way of the World* lay open on the editor's desk, and the brilliant article on the High Life episode was uppermost. Mr. Amelia had indeed been looking at it, and trying to see if it were possible to quibble over it, and pretend that it was not meant to apply to Lady Ella and Windgall and Jack Clare. But his own workmanship had been too neat and sound. He had clinched the nail of identity so well, that there was no withdrawing it. The Major caught sight of the Journal, and, dropping his eye-glass stooped until his nose almost touched the paper. Then, his fancy being confirmed, he drew himself upright, stuck the glass in his eye once more, and tapped the paper with his cane.

"Is that piece of rascality your work, sir?" he demanded.

Half-a-dozen retorts chased each other through Mr. Amelia's mind, but he employed no one of them. He remembered that Captain Clare and Major Heard were friends, and the dreadful truth was plain to him. This visit was the preliminary to legal proceedings.

"Is that piece of rascality your work, sir?" he demanded anew, tapping the offending article so loudly that the private secretary started at the sound.

"You must surely be aware, sir," said Mr. Amelia, rousing himself to the occasion, "that a question offered in that tone and in those terms, is not one which you, yourself, would answer."

"Did you write that article, sir?" cried the Major. "Is that blackguard article yours, sir?"

Mr. Amelia was not wanting in courage of a certain sort, but then he was so very small a man that he could not resist a consciousness of his own helplessness in comparison with a man like Major Heard, and when the Major put this question he

struck the table so resoundingly in his wrath, and brought his cane to the slope with so military a gesture, that the editor's heart became as water within him, and he responded meekly.

"To which article do you allude, sir?"

"That," cried the Major, bringing down his stick again, "that, sir."

Mr. Amelia looked carefully at the article, and did not even see it, he was so disturbed.

"It is not customary to reveal the names of our authors," he answered. "But I have just learned, to my great regret, that this article has been written on insufficient grounds, and——"

"Insufficient grounds, sir?" cried the Major. "Insufficient grounds? There is not one grain of truth in the whole infamous tissue of lies." The Major was apt to mix his similes when excited. He had spoken once of Mr. Amelia as of a Snake in the Grass who bit the hand that fed him, and his public speeches were resplendent with that sort of jewel. "I am here, sir, in behalf of my friend, Captain Clare, formally to purchase a copy of your abominable journal, and to inform you that he intends to institute immediate criminal proceedings, against the writer of the article, the editor, and the proprietor."

"The article," said Mr. Amelia, "was written under a complete misapprehension of the facts. Our next issue will contain a complete retractation and apology."

"Oblige me with a copy of the paper," said the Major.

"The retractation," said Mr. Amelia, "shall be made as full and complete as possible."

"I am not authorised to accept any apology," returned the Major, "nor, I am persuaded, will any apology be accepted by my friend. We shall press this scandalous matter to the end. We shall press for the extreme rigour of the law."

This was very dreadful to Mr. Amelia.

"I assure you, Major Heard," he protested, "that the article was written in error, not in malice."

"Not in malice?" demanded the Major, with frosty indignation. The apparent insolence of this statement cooled him on a sudden. "If you can induce a jury to believe that Mr. Kimberley was actuated by no enmity to Captain Clare when he inspired this article——" Mr. Amelia cut him short.

"Mr. Kimberley," he cried, "was utterly ignorant of the article. It was written without his knowledge, and printed without his knowledge." The Major stared at this, and Mr. Amelia hurried along. Affairs were looking desperate, and if anything were to be done at all it could only be done by making

a clean breast of it. "The article was written by me, as a matter of fact, sir, and I regret deeply that I was induced to write without further examination into the statements that were laid before me.

"That is very natural," said the Major.

"The information," pursued Mr. Amelia, "came from a source which we have hitherto found to be perfectly trustworthy. But it appears that my informant confounded the career of Captain Clare with that of a Captain Stracey, so that really the article does not reflect upon Captain Clare at all."

"I am very pleased to hear that," said the old warrior grimly.

"The whole history refers to another person," cried Mr. Amelia.

"Well, sir," said the Major, "I had intended this visit to be purely formal, and nothing but this unexpected meeting with an old friend, whom I have such sound reasons for admiring, would have induced me to prolong it. You will have an opportunity of establishing your employer's innocence and your own ill fortune before a jury, sir. For the present I will only ask you to supply me with a copy of your last issue."

Mr. Amelia somewhat feebly opened the door, and Major Heard passed into the outer room.

"Give this gentleman a copy of this week's paper," said the editor. The secretary proffered a paper to the Major, who opened it to verify it with the one he desired to purchase. "Oh!" cried Mr. Amelia, anxious to propitiate, "that's of no consequence."

The Major, who had drawn out his purse to pay, drew forth a sixpence and rung it on the counter, and then bestowing the journal in his breast-pocket, turned upon his heel and marched into the court. Mr. Amelia had so long been present to his mind as a little crawling figure of baseness, that he was rather pleased than otherwise to find in him the author of this obnoxious article. The Major could feel no compunction over the punishment of Mr. Amelia, nothing but that grim rejoicing with which, according to the creed of some, a good man is justified in regarding the castigation of a sinner. There are others, a mere sentimental few, perhaps, who feel that it is hard measure to be a sinner, and who can find the same sort of pity for a liar as for a hunchback, for an egotist as for a deaf man, for a thief as for a paralytic.

The clever little self-seeker and time-server went back into the editorial sanctum with a limp and sickly air, and sitting down with his head between his hands and his elbows on the desk, tried to see a way out of this *cul de sac* and found none. The best way of mitigating his own chances of suffering would

be to make a full and complete apology. If it told with nobody else it might tell with the judge. Awful fancy. Mr. Amelia saw the judge—dreadful in scarlet and ermine and a wig, and heard him say, "Prisoner at the bar." Great Heaven! what a position for a respectable man to be placed in. The fancy actually nerved him and he seized a pen and wrote—

"To the Editor of the——" (there he left a blank) "Sir,—I rely upon your kindness to assist me in dissipating a scandal of which I myself am the unfortunate propagator. Relying upon information derived from a source which has hitherto been absolutely trustworthy, I consented to the insertion of an article in *The Way of the World* which reflects seriously upon the character of a gentleman whom I now discover to be perfectly innocent of the charges made against him. The article is entitled 'An Episode in High Life,' and appeared in the issue of the 9th instant. I desire to express my profoundest regret for its insertion, and my conviction that it is totally without foundation. A threat of legal proceedings has already been made. It is not in deference to that threat, but from an earnest desire to clear the character of a gentleman who has been mistakenly aspersed, that I write this letter. I am, Sir, your obedient servant, the Editor of *The Way of the World.*

Mr. Amelia laboured long and anxiously at this letter, and had to doctor and tinker it a good deal before he got it to this shape. But when he had finished it he read it over half-a-dozen times, and became satisfied that there was an air of manly candour and regret about it which could scarcely fail to have its effect upon the awful personage in the wig and ermine, when his time should come. He was especially hopeful in respect to that artful admission that threats of legal proceedings had already been made. It looked artless, and as if the writer were too eager to exculpate the maligned gentleman to have time to consider his own wisest words.

He felt keenly that under ordinary circumstances an editor would have a wider shield of anonymity than he had left himself. He had been so anxious to be seen that he had chopped that shelter all away, and now he was a little sorry for it. To his own mind there could hardly be an intelligent creature alive who was unaware that *The Way of the World* was conducted by Mr. William Amelia. Now he could have wished that he had clarioned that fact a little less.

"Make copies of that for each of the London dailies," he said to his private secretary. "Write them on office paper, put them in office envelopes, and post them immediately."

The secretary laughed to himself as he read the letter, and smiled softly all the while as he copied it. Nobody liked Mr. Amelia, and almost anybody who knew him took a pleasure in any small discomfiture which might befall him. The little editor sat mournful whilst the secretary sat smiling, and the vision in the wig and the ermine assumed at moments a distinctness which was downright uncomfortable.

Whilst all this was enacting with the libeller, the libelled betook himself with extreme reluctance to the Earl of Windgall.

"My lord," said Jack, when he was shown into Windgall's room, "I am here on an unhappy errand. I scarcely know how to explain it. Perhaps I had better ask you at once if you have seen or heard of this article?"

His lordship, receiving the article quietly enough, had scarce read half-a-dozen lines when he began to fidget in his chair as if some person unseen were sticking needles into him. Mr. Amelia's charming article began with his lordship, around whom he danced with a sort of elfish grotesquerie, firing stinging crackers, as it were, the while, and launching stinging Liliputian darts. There was no disputing the small man's cleverness. Even the injured nobleman could feel that he was attacked by a master in the art of saying nasty things, and not by any common penny-a-liner and maligner. The worst of it was for Windgall that whilst there was no mistaking the portrait, there was not a ghost of a chance for an action. But as his lordship read on a smile began to irradiate his features, and he not only ceased to writhe, but read with an actual aspect of contentment.

"Well, Clare," he said, when he had gone right through his task, "this is really your affair and not mine."

"It was needful that you should see it," said Jack.

"It was certainly advisable that I should see it," said his lordship, taking his share of the article with stoicism, now that he got over the first astonishment of it. "So you are a horse-coper and a card-sharper, and I am—well, I am a number of disagreeable things. What steps do you intend to take? Have you any idea of the identity of the author. God bless my soul," he cried, with sudden amazement, "it's *The Way of the World*. It can't be. It's a bogus copy," said the Earl to himself.

"I do not as yet know the name of the author, but I know the name of the proprietor."

"The proprietor?" said the Earl, automatically. "Yes. Certainly, one knows the proprietor."

"I presume," said Jack, "that whatever steps are taken

must be taken against him. I am advised to take criminal proceedings——"

"Impossible!" cried Windgall. "Impossible! My dear Clare, you don't know what you are saying."

"Impossible, my lord?" cried Clare in answer. "I recognise the unpleasantness of the situation to the full, but surely there are scarcely any circumstances in the world which could make it possible to pass by so gross a scandal."

"Sit down, Clare," said his lordship. "I must make a clean breast of it, or you can never understand. You do know the name of the proprietor? Who is it?"

"Mr. Bolsover Kimberley is the proprietor," said Jack.

"My friend Bolsover Kimberley," said his lordship, "is the proprietor of this paper, and is as innocent of this outrage and as incapable of it as any man alive. Mr. Kimberley has acted with a tact, a delicacy, a sense of honour and a generosity in this whole matter, which are beyond praise." Jack looked at his lordship open-eyed. "You are aware," said his lordship, with a momentary shamefacedness, "that Mr. Kimberley made a proposal for the hand of my eldest daughter, and that his proposal was accepted." The listener bowed with a face of scarlet. "I am a poor man, as you know, and it appears that Ella fancied she saw a way of relieving me of my embarrassments. It was for my sake, and for my sake only, that she consented to listen to Mr. Kimberley's proposals. When I asked her," continued his lordship, who could not help being disingenuous now and then, "if that was not her object, she assured me that she would not be unhappy in the match. But Kimberley saw that she detested it, and that she was suffering because of it. He came to me, and, in the most delicate manner in the world, he released her. He did more. He informed me of her attachment to yourself, and he—he made proposals of a—of a business nature which resulted in my being able to send for you. Indeed, I must tell you that he insisted upon my sending for you. And our—our business arrangements were of such a character that if he had pleased he could have ruined me. In—in short," said his lordship, who stumbled more and more, until he found himself forced into candour, "it is to him you owe your present position here. He retired, for Ella's sake, in your favour."

At this prodigious news Jack sat stunned and dazed, and his lordship, arising, began to walk about the room.

"Let me tell you another thing, Clare, to show you how impossible it is that Kimberley should have had any cognisance

of this article. His proposal to Lady Ella was not dictated, as I own I thought it was at first, by any desire to gild his money by an alliance with an old family. He loved her, Clare."

At this Jack rose also and walked quickly to the window. That Ella's father should say that Kimberley had loved her was like a blasphemy against her. He did not think it so, but felt it so.

"He loved her so well," pursued the Earl, "and it so broke his heart to surrender her, that he lies here, in this house, in this hotel, now, at this hour, sick to death of brain fever, and her name is always on his lips. I am at a loss to say how I feel this. I am altogether at a loss to say how keenly it touches me. I despised the man, and he is worth a thousand of such men as I am."

His lordship enjoyed his own emotion and his own self-depreciation, and yet he *was* honestly moved, as he had been from the first moment of his real understanding of it, by Kimberley's self-abnegation. He could not bring himself greatly to like Clare just at present, but Ella's new happiness and the new beauty he saw in her face touched him so keenly that he could do no less than welcome Clare's return for her sake. The long-forgotten glad smile, and the happy heart whose sweet reflected light it was, were Kimberley's gifts to him and her, and there were times when they far outweighed that solid ninety thousand pounds, which had once seemed the heavier.

"May I ask you," said Jack, speaking from the window, "where it was that Mr. Kimberley made this generous appeal in my behalf?"

"His first appeal in your behalf," said Windgall, "was made at Gallowbay, on the day I met you there."

"The day," said Jack, inwardly, "on which I insulted him."

"He appears to have seen you," said the Earl, rather awkwardly, "whilst he was on his way to me, that afternoon."

"Did he tell you what happened between us?" asked Clare.

"No," said Windgall. "I did not know that you had spoken to him."

"Is he dangerously ill, my lord?" Clare asked, after a lengthy pause.

"He has had a relapse," said his lordship. "The doctors are less hopeful than they were." Then, after another lengthy pause, "You see, Clare," Windgall said, "how innocent poor Kimberley is of this blackguard business. You must find out who the writer is, and compel him to a complete retractation of this farrago of nonsense, though, as a matter of fact, nobody will do more than laugh at it. By the way, don't I remember

something of all this, about some fellow, a Cumberland man, an army man? I seem to remember that something of the kind came out a year or two ago."

"Yes," said Jack. "His name was Stracey. He went away. People lost sight of him. Somebody told me he was a billiard-marker at Dublin, but nothing is quite sure about him now."

"Ah!" said my lord, "and they have bestowed his history on you. Very agreeable, certainly."

"My friend Major Heard," said Jack, "went to the office this morning, to say that criminal proceedings would be taken."

"Against whom can you proceed?" asked Windgall. "I am a legislator, certainly, but I am no lawyer, and I don't understand these things. Whatever you do, don't make a move without legal advice. And do nothing that will cause poor Kimberley trouble," he added. "Heaven only knows whether he will ever wake to know of it; but if he does it will be a deeper wound to him than it has been either to you or to me."

Jack took his news to Major Heard, and next day all the leading journals published Mr. Amelia's apology. The *Herald* had an article about it, for Mr. Amelia was associated with the *Constitutional*, and it and the *Herald* were natural enemies.

"The gentleman whose character was thus scandalously attacked," said the *Herald*, "did not even stand in need of this withdrawal of the libel. As associated with him the whole series of charges was no less than frantically absurd, and the editor of *The Way of the World* had but to ask one who was no more acquainted with the *grand monde* than a flunky might be, to have discovered that an old story had been affixed to a new name, and palmed off upon him as a fresh and original scandal."

Jack Clare, in the unprofessional innocence of his heart, imagined that this was written by somebody who knew him, as it well might have been, since he had been for years a familiar figure about the clubs where journalists most do congregate. But, as it happened, the gentleman who thus wrote in his defence, had never heard of him, and did not know to whom the libellous article alluded. The grand monde was not his particular study, but he disliked Amelia, and was pleased to have a dig at him.

Mr. Amelia, in next week's issue of *The Way of the World*, published a new retractation in large type, prompted thereto by a dread of the ghost in wig and ermine, and he awaited in melancholy mood the first note of those criminal proceedings which Major Heard had threatened.

CHAPTER XXXI.

On a certain morning Bolsover Kimberley awoke to find himself little more than skin and bone—the skin extremely pallid and transparent, and the bone so heavy that each hand seemed to weigh a hundredweight. He discovered that his hair and his whiskers had alike been removed, and on first seeing himself in a glass he laughed himself into a feeble hysteria, out of which he fell in a moment into deep sleep. He awoke again feeling wonderfully like a child, and like a child he was washed and fed and tended. For some days he did not care much about anything. The past lay dead with a strange dead pall upon it, the present was languid and uninteresting, and it seemed as if there were no such thing as a future in store for him at all.

Windgall was assiduous in his attentions to the invalid, and saw as much of him as the doctors permitted, being moved to a genuine gratitude and esteem, which, as may be acknowledged, Kimberley had well earned at his hands. There was no longer any question in my lord's mind as to the propriety of accepting Kimberley's gift, and assurance had been made doubly sure on that point by the burning of all the documents. After that it was of no use to have any qualms about them, and perhaps my lord had chosen the best as well as the readiest way out of his perplexities. There was some little remaining sense of humiliation, but there was no dishonour in the acceptance of the gift, and Windgall tried to atone to himself by thinking very highly of the giver. His appreciation of Kimberley's high qualities was continually on the stretch, so that, in point of fact, he rather bored himself with Kimberley than otherwise, and constantly flogged his own senses of gratitude and admiration, until that willing pair showed signs of overwork, and refused to stir at all without the lash.

After the first dull days which succeeded his return to reason, the sore places in Kimberley's heart naturally began to throb and ache again, but his pains were subdued in comparison with what they had been, and they scarcely retarded his recovery. Ella and Alice had taken up their quarters with an old friend of their mother's, who had a curious craze for residing far into the winter months in London, a fancy which for once in a way proved convenient, though it was execrated by all the people who had expectations from her, and were compelled to follow

her example. Windgall lived on at the hotel and nursed his patient.

Jack Clare felt his own position in regard to Kimberley to be altogether singular, and he found it difficult to think of his self-sacrificing rival without a constant shame. But for that interview in the King's Avenue he would have had nothing for which to blame himself in connection with Kimberley; but he flushed with anger and mortification many and many a time when he thought of that scene, and of his own brutal and inexcusable behaviour. For Jack's scheme about Kimberley had necessarily undergone a wonderful change, and in his eyes the little man wore a sort of halo.

Every day saw him at the hotel making inquiries after Kimberley's progress towards recovery.

"You needn't tell him I called, sir," said the young man to Windgall, "but I like to know how he is getting on."

Day by day the doctors were more confident of complete recovery, and in a while the invalid was strong enough to be sent to a watering-place on the South Coast, where he wandered mournful and alone, and stared a good deal at the melancholy main, and on the whole found life hardly worth the living. It happened one day that he had a little overtaxed his strength in walking, and had to stand still in the middle of the parade. His head swam so with weakness and fatigue that he lurched a little, and was relieved to find a strong arm thrust within his own, and to hear a voice proffering assistance. When he had reached one of the small glass-roofed resting-places with which the whole length of the parade is dotted, and had been gently seated there, he looked up for the first time and recognised his assistant. It was no other than the Honourable Captain Clare, who, with genuine concern and friendship in his eyes, stood bending over him, and blushing like a schoolboy.

"You are still very weak," said Captain Clare. "Do you think it quite safe to venture out alone just yet?"

"I walked too far," returned Kimberley, feebly. "That's all."

"You don't mind my sitting with you a little while?" asked Clare.

"Thank you," answered Kimberley. "You are very kind." Then for a time they were both silent. The millionnaire shrank somewhat in his own heart from Captain Clare, and found his presence a reminder of a pain which needed no reminder. The sight of him galled the sore place in Kimberley's heart. "I am quite right, now," said the little man, after some two or three minutes had gone by.

"Let me offer you my arm," said Clare, with unwonted shyness.

"No, thank you," said Kimberley. "I'm not so weak as you think I am. I'm not, really."

"Do, pray, let me help you," urged the repentant and pitiful Jack, and Kimberley yielded, half to something beseeching in the tone, and half to his own shyness. "I think you are staying at the Queen's Hotel?"

"Yes," answered Kimberley.

"I saw you leave it an hour ago," said Jack; and then they went on in silence, Kimberley finding the stalwart arm a real help to him, but wishing it and its owner far removed.

When they reached the hotel, he put out a feeble little hand, and bade his assistant good-day. "I am very much obliged to you, I am sure," he said, meekly, and Jack stood to watch him, with some compunctions in his heart, as he walked slowly up the steps.

The millionnaire was out again in the afternoon, and was unaware of the fact that Captain Clare watched him throughout his brief ramble as carefully as a nurse might watch a child. But next day he saw him, and sore-hearted as he was, could do no less than recognise him. Jack crossed over and shook hands.

"You are looking better to-day," he said.

"Yes," said Kimberley, wearily. "I am getting stronger every day." The balance had turned in favour of life, and he would have to go on living. It was a sorrowful business, and he would rather have had no more to do with it.

"May I walk a little way with you?" asked the other, gently. "Will you take my arm?"

They went on side by side slowly, and in a while Kimberley sat down upon an overturned boat which lay on the sands, just hereabouts as firm as marble. The day was mild and clear, and the sea heaved gently like the breast of a child asleep. There was nobody within two or three hundred yards of them, and they could hear the sound of a child's prattle and laughter without distinguishing her words.

"Mr. Kimberley," said Jack, breaking on the silence with a tremulous voice, "I have to go back to town to-morrow, and we may not meet again for a long time. Will you let me say how honestly ashamed I am to have insulted such a noble heart as yours."

"No, no," said Kimberley, appealingly. "Please don't say anything."

"I came down here," continued Jack, in spite of this, "on

purpose to beg your pardon. The first time we met I spoke in ignorance and passion, and I am profoundly ashamed of the words I used. I beg you to forgive them, and to dismiss them from your mind."

"Please say no more," Kimberley again besought him. "I deserved everything that happened." He leaned his chin dejectedly upon his breast, and pushed the point of his cane about in the firm sands.

"I see that I distress you, Mr. Kimberley," said Jack, gently and sadly. "But I beg you to think of me, if you think of me at all, as the most grateful and devoted of your friends."

There was something which bordered on the grotesque in this situation, and it does not happen every day that one lover has to thank another for giving up his sweetheart. In Jack Clare's case words seemed altogether inefficient, and for Kimberley, they could be, at least at present, of very little value, if of any.

"It is not always the best man who wins," said the winner to himself, and at that moment he felt thoroughly that Kimberley was his better.

"It is very kind of you to say so," answered Kimberley, after a longish pause, in response to the last words Clare had spoken aloud. There was another lengthy pause, and it was again broken by Kimberley. "I should not like you to think," he said, looking up for an instant, "that I don't accept what you have said, in a proper spirit. It is very kind of you to have come here to say it, and I am very much obliged to you. It was no excuse for me, but I did not know that I was standing in your light."

He bent his head a little lower, and went on pushing the point of his cane about, and Clare standing over him saw one or two glittering drops fall down upon the broken sands at his feet. He turned away at this with a sense of tightness in the throat, and paced up and down, until Kimberley arose and approached him.

"Good-bye," said the little millionnaire, extending his hand. "Please give my kindest regards to his lordship when you see him." He shook hands and turned away. "I am sure," he said, with his face thus hidden, "that I hope you may be happy."

Clare stood stupidly by the boat's side, feeling in an odd way quite foiled, though he had done all he came to do, and his apology had been amply accepted. There was a gulf between Kimberley and himself, and was always likely to be; and yet if the thing had not been downright impossible he would like to

have bridged it over. One man had rarely had—or so he thought—so much reason for gratitude and friendship towards another, as he had for both towards Kimberley.

So he went back to town, but little the better for that honest errand which had brought him away from it.

The millionnaire walking back to his hotel, bearing his sores with him, found Mr. Begg awaiting him. He had forgotten for a while that he had written requesting his presence.

"Lord Windgall tells me that you have been seriously ill," said the lawyer. "You hardly look recovered yet."

"I am not very strong," returned Kimberley, "but the doctors tell me that I am out of danger." He sighed at this as if it were no great good news for him.

"That's well," said the lawyer, heartily. "I suppose that the business concerning which you wished to see me is pressing. It is a considerable journey from Gallowbay to Hastings."

He laughed and rubbed his hands, thinking that the head of so respectable a firm as his own could scarcely be expected to travel as far for nothing, and half apologising in his manner for that comfortable reflection.

"Yes," said Kimberley, his pale face flushing a little; "the business is pressing, or I seem to feel it so. I want to make my will. One never knows what may happen, and I think I ought to make my will."

"Certainly, certainly, certainly," cried Mr. Begg. "In this world there is nothing certain but uncertainty. It's astonishing to notice how many men neglect to arrange their affairs in that way."

"If you could take my instructions now, Mr. Begg," said Kimberley, rising and walking to the window with evident embarrassment, "I should be obliged."

A year ago he would scarcely have dared to talk of offering instructions to Mr. Begg, but he was falling naturally into the phrases used by other people, and was hardly like the Kimberley of old days at all.

"Certainly," said Mr. Begg, seating himself at a table on which were pen, ink, and paper.

"I want to leave everything of which I may die possessed, without any condition or reserve, to Lady Ella Santerre."

"Yes?" said Mr. Begg lingeringly, and awaited Kimberley's next word. Kimberley, continuing to look out of window, and offering no further word, Mr. Begg himself broke the silence. "That is in case Lady Ella should outlive you. In case she should not?"

"To her children," said poor Kimberley, almost inaudibly.

"And failing children?" asked Mr. Begg, purposely employing a dry business tone to hide his own knowledge of his client's embarrassment. Kimberley was silent for so long a time that Mr. Begg was again compelled to break the silence. "You see, Mr. Kimberley," he said, turning round in his chair, and making as if he addressed himself confidentially to the wedge he formed of his own fingers, "you are bequeathing a great fortune, a great fortune, and that is not a thing which can be done in a single sentence. The world is full of uncertainties. Nobody knows that much more practically than a lawyer. And in making a will one must take into account a good many possible contingencies."

Kimberley saw this quite clearly, but it was not what he had wanted or expected. He was still very feeble from his recent fever, and the weakness of his body had weakened his heart somewhat. He had never been a strong creature, and the one strong thing in his life had been his love for Ella. That had been strong enough to enable him to renounce all hope of her for the sake of her happiness, which was infinitely dearer to him than his own. But in this new falling back upon his own nature, which followed upon his one heroism, he had got some sentimental comfort—it would be a hard heart that could laugh at it—out of the hope and belief that he would die, and that Ella would be enriched by his death, and that he would be finally not only out of the way of her happiness, but the actual promoter and crowner of it. He meant to dower Lady Ella with everything, and then to die as speedily as Heaven should will. The contingencies the lawyer brought in view made a commonplace business of something which ought to have been altogether removed from commonplace. There are few things more shocking than this kind of unescapable incongruity to those whose nature it is to feel it. There are some people who would not be hurt if Othello stopped in his rage of remorse to reckon the cost of Desdemona's coffin, but there are others who want their moods to be of a piece, and who feel altogether disconcerted by the intrusion of any incongruous element.

He sat down without heart or interest to advise with the lawyer on the disposal to be made of his money in case his original intentions should be frustrated, and talked about the Gallowbay Harbour and a Hospital and a Grammar School and a Church and a Chapel for Gallowbay, and an annual benefaction for the poor, for Kimberley had not, so far as he knew, a single blood relation in the world.

The will grew into a formal and lengthy document in the

course of a week or two, far far removed from Kimberley's first simple and romantic notion, and when he came to read it, the long-familiar jargon of its phrases—the afore-mentioned, and the hereinafter-to-be-mentioned, and the freehold tenement with all the appurtenances thereto belonging, together with the mines and minerals thereunder—seemed to carry him back into the time of his servitude.

In brief, his heart had made a poem of this last will and testament, and the lawyers had turned it into prose. It is not every poem that will bear translating into prose, and the author, of all men, is little likely to be charmed by the translation.

Mr. Begg knew pretty fairly the truth of Kimberley's story, and curiously enough had a high respect for the romance of it. But during his client's illness he had read, as almost everybody had done, Mr. Amelia's masterpiece in *The Way of the World*, and knowing Kimberley's connection with that journal was somewhat puzzled.

"I have never been out of England in my life," said Kimberley, when the will had been read and signed and witnessed, "and I think I shall go and travel. I don't know, but I mayn't be back for a long while, and—I've never been much good in parliamentary life. I shall ask for the Chiltern Hundreds."

Mr. Begg tried to combat this resolve, but in vain.

"Travel by all means, Mr. Kimberley," he said with a smile, "but don't desert the interests of Gallowbay. The New Harbour Bill will be before the House next session, and we had relied upon your influence. Your position in Gallowbay would be of weight with the Committee."

"You can get a better man than me," said Kimberley. "Major Heard would be a better man."

"But Major Heard is a Whig," cried the lawyer.

"Major Heard would do very well," said Kimberley drearily. "But, of course, they will choose the man they like best. And I have a newspaper, Mr. Begg. It never succeeded very well, but the editor is a very clever person, and I think I shall make him a present of it. He told me that a newspaper was like a child, and had to have teething and measles and all those things before it became strong. It may have had them all by this time, and perhaps he can do something with it."

Mr. Begg, as a lawyer, naturally suggested the selling of the paper, but Kimberley answered,

"You see, Mr. Amelia has had everything to do with it so far, and if anybody is to profit by it he ought to be the person."

When Kimberley was strong enough he went back to London

and called upon Mr. Amelia. Mr. Amelia had been awaiting for week after week those legal proceedings which Major Heard had so confidently promised, and had felt like a new Damocles. When Kimberley entered the office he thought the sword had fallen.

"I have had an illness," said the millionnaire, simply, "and I am going abroad. I am giving up my seat in parliament, and I don't want a newspaper any longer."

Of course, Mr. Amelia imagined in his conscious cunning that he could pierce that subterfuge. Kimberley was simply throwing him over.

"The journal," he said, "is just beginning to be of influence and importance, and is just ceasing to be expensive. Indeed, I may say it pays its expenses now."

"I am glad of that," said Kimberley. "If you can carry it on to your own advantage I shall be very pleased."

For a moment Mr. Amelia could scarcely conceal his own surprise; but nature is elastic, and however you may pull her from her original shape, she will settle back again.

"I had prepared a schedule of liabilities," said Mr. Amelia. "Perhaps I had better lay it before you now."

Kimberley looked at the schedule and produced his cheque-book.

"He can very well afford it," said the editor, as Kimberley signed his name below a set of considerable figures.

"That is everything?" said Kimberley.

"Everything, thank you," returned Mr. Amelia. "But do I understand that you resign all interest in the journal?"

"Yes," said Kimberley. "I am going abroad, probably for a long time. I hope you will be able to make a property of it. If anybody profits by it," he added, with a touch of his ancient shyness, "it should be you. Good-bye, Mr. Amelia."

"Good-bye, Mr. Kimberley," answered the editor; "I am very much obliged to you."

Kimberley did not wait to see if Mr. Amelia's gratitude for this unexpected favour would carry him to further heights of eloquence in thanks; and when he had gone the newly-made proprietor sat down and looked about him like a monarch of all he surveyed. Then, his exultation being too great to be endured without bodily motion, he got up and paced about the room, looking more like a bantam-cock than ever. All on a sudden he seemed to shrink, and he dropped into the revolving chair with a look of horror and amazement.

"A trap!" he groaned. "Of course, it's a trap. He has handed everything to me and gone abroad. He was just as much responsible as I was."

Apart from the fact that this surmise showed what Mr. Amelia himself would have done in what he believed to be the circumstances, it was without result, and as week after week passed away in safety he felt himself secure; but a month or two had to go by before he was certain enough of his own security to send forth a round of paragraphs announcing that "Mr. William Amelia, who from the foundation of *The Way of the World* has conducted its destinies, has now acquired complete proprietorial rights over that journal, and purposes introducing into it several features which are altogether novel in English journalism."

In spite of anything and everything the little man was rising. He had his enemies—what man who is worth his salt has not?—but he knew that they hated him through envy of his success, and that their rancour was barbed by the contemplation in him of qualities which none of them possessed. His one bête noire was Maddox, who was rising also, and beginning to shine as a poet, and lately as a novelist. The clever little gentleman had command of the columns of many journals now, and from behind that shield of darkness which obscures so many brilliant writers in England he shot arrows at his enemy, which might have stung pretty deeply if the enemy had not known the hand that impelled them. Mr. Amelia's pet ruse was to treat the name of Kyrle Maddox as a nom de guerre, a method which secured an admirable air of impartiality. For, argued Mr. Amelia, if people suppose that you do not know a man, they cannot accuse you of spite towards him. Lest any of these sprightly shafts should miss their intended victim, the little man had them posted to Maddox, and since he had now a cashier, an office boy, and a private secretary all at his own disposal, he found it easy to get these friendly missives addressed by different hands.

Agreeable as this occasional exercise was sure to be, it could only be occasional, and the greater part of Mr. Amelia's time was still occupied by his purely journalistic duties. He found leisure, however, to write the romance of *Jacob Zladder*, a novel long ago alluded to in these pages as having contained a bitter portrait of one of Mr. Amelia's old enemies. Long before this brilliant work appeared the world was aware of its coming. From John o'Groats to Land's End public expectation might have been supposed to be on tiptoe, if one could judge from the frequency with which an anxious country was informed of its inception, its progress, the title finally fixed upon, the nature of the plot, and the amount of money the gifted author was to

receive for the work. The twenty or five-and-twenty journals with which Mr. Amelia was connected were all charmed with the book, and if the opinions expressed by others were not so favourable, what can be more obvious than that a father is likely to think with some partiality of his own child, or that, however beautiful the child may be, the outside crowd of fathers will not love it quite as dearly as if it were their own?

Mr. Amelia's way was not the common way of English journalists, but its advantages are clear to the dullest understanding. The average journalist toils on unknown. He expends much learning, and now and then high genius, in a calling which condemns him to obscurity. In measure with the quantity and quality of his work he is but poorly paid. Mr. Amelia throve, and will doubtless continue to thrive. His name is likely to be a household word (for a year or two, whilst he himself lives to scatter it abroad) in two hemispheres. If nobody can point to much that he has actually done, everybody can lay a finger on his published judgment of himself, and our British habit of anonymity makes this as valuable to him as if the judgments came from the pens of critics the most independent and profound.

Nowadays the bard has no need to weigh the solid pudding against the empty praise. The empty praise will bring the solid pudding in its turn.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Kimberley, in the inclement months of the New Year, wandered on the continent, and wrote to nobody because he had nobody to write to. Jack Clare had heard from his agent in New Zealand. The land bought out there was as good as it could be expected to be, and the agent was doing all he could with it, but made it clear that he would be satisfied with his master's early presence; and Jack Clare himself had not quite made up his mind as to what he ought to do, and could do. On the receipt of this letter he travelled to Gallowbay, whither Ella and Alice had retired with his lordship their father, and laid his difficulties before his sweetheart.

"When I thought I had lost you, my darling," said Jack, "I made up my mind that I would go out there and work, because it seemed as if I *could* live if I took something real and tangible in hand. And now that I have found you again, what am I to

do? We are very poor, and I do not see what roads to an honourable success in life are open to me here. Your father is very kind. He offers to settle on you at least as much as I have myself, and in England that will still leave us poor. He offers me all the influence he has at his disposal, and Montacute does the same. But then I have my political opinions, and I can't sell my conscience; and I have no influence on my side at all. I might have it in time if I could get into Parliament, and could do anything there to make myself noticeable."

He spoke slowly and thoughtfully, with long pauses between the sentences, like a man who is feeling his way, and thinking it out bit by bit. Ella, with some neglected trifle of embroidery between her fingers, sat with both hands in her lap, and regarded him gravely and tenderly.

"You want to go out there, dear?" she asked.

"When I was alone I wanted to go there," he answered. "I want now to do two things. I want to feel that I am doing something of the world's work, somehow, and I want to escape poverty. You see, my darling, there is a class in England which has gone on doing nothing for a long time, and at last the day has come when some of us will have to turn our hands to the plough in one way or another. Now, Charley is useful in the House of Lords, and his politics and his domestic affairs take up all his time. He works hard and lives economically, and has his duty plain before him. He is doing it, too, like a man and a Briton. Now, what have I to do?"

Ella sat silent for a time, regarding him with grave affectionate eyes.

"These are serious matters, Jack, dear," she said at last. "Let us face them seriously. Do you wish me to go out to New Zealand with you?"

"I have thought of that," he answered, "and the idea frightens me for your sake. There would be no 'privations,' in the common sense of the word, but there would be privations, too, which you would find real enough. There would be little or no society; little or no intercourse with social equals. The life would be dull—might even be terrible—to a gentlewoman."

"Should you ask me to milk and make hay, Jack?" she asked, smiling.

"No," said Jack, smiling also. "I think we might spare you that sort of thing." He was suddenly serious again. "But the life would be dull. I should have to buckle-to in earnest, and learn to be a practical man. But whenever I have thought of that sort of life for you, I have been filled with a sort

of remorse and shame. You were made to shine in a court, my darling, and not to be hidden in a New Zealand homestead."

"I am not altogether sure that I should care to shine in a court, Jack," said Ella; "I have had no great experience in that way, but perhaps I might not care for it, even if I had it. Tell me candidly whatever is to be said against New Zealand. So far, I see one thing only that seems to affect me at all. The distance looks dreadful."

"Yes," Jack answered; "the distance is a serious matter."

"What else is there?" she asked. "I see nothing else that moves me at all against it."

"The inevitable dulness of the life."

"We should be there together," she answered, softly. "Is the dulness so inevitable?"

Jack looked round to where, at the far end of the room, Alice sat with her back towards the pair, immersed in a book, and then gently taking one of Ella's hands he kissed it, and seemed so extremely loath to let it go when she strove to disengage it from his grasp, that she suffered him to keep it.

"Social prejudice," he said then. "Social prejudice is a strong thing."

"We should be far away from it," she answered.

She was naturally a woman of quick and keen perception, and, so far as Jack Clare was concerned, she lost nothing in this respect, but rather gained a great deal, by being in love with him. She knew that this had been his scheme and his hope for years, and for his sake she argued in its favour. For her own part, she had no fear of being unhappy whilst they two were together. She loved him and he loved her, and that double knowledge seemed to make her strong. In comparison with it, the things that Jack had set against his own scheme looked trivial and unworthy of regard.

"Your father," said Jack, when he had kissed her hand again. "I have never yet ventured to broach the idea to him."

The girl was grave and silent for a long time.

"What advantages does your plan offer?" she asked at length.

He answered slowly and with reluctance, as if he were struggling against something within himself.

"I see no avenue to usefulness and prosperity in England. I think I see a road to both out there. The country is new and growing fast. Land is increasing in value, and in a generation or two the estate will be a noble one. Here I might become, almost at the best, a hungry political place-hunter, for I could

not afford to adopt politics unless I made the business pay ; but there I could be of use. You see what you have taken hold of, dear."

"Yes," she said, with a smile so ravishing that Jack must needs kiss the imprisoned hand again. "I see."

"A social failure in old England, I am afraid," said the young man, with sudden mournfulness.

"Through any fault of yours?" she asked him.

"I think not," he said, a little comforted. "I hope not. I believe not. And yet a social failure all the same. Born to be a social failure. A poor man's younger son."

"And I am a poor man's eldest daughter," she said, smiling once more. "Was I born to be a social failure too?"

"You were born to be an empress," cried Jack ; but he looked dejected a mere second after this outburst of enthusiasm. "I feel wicked and remorseful when I think of asking you to leave everybody you have known, and all the ways of life you have known, to come with me to that far away country."

"Let us say and think no more of that, dear," said Ella. "We elected each other, and we must make the best of our choice. And we love each other." She blushed divinely, but she looked at him with perfect courage, and never drooped her eyes. "If you wish to take me, I will go."

In a good woman's love for the man she has chosen there is always a sense of protection and defence. It does not matter in the least how stalwart or self-sufficient the man may be, or how weak and helpless the woman; her instinct is still to protect him. All good women, married or single, are mothers at heart, and there is something motherly in such a woman's affection for her lover or her husband. It is mixed, of course, with all sorts of worship and awe and passion, and what not; but it is there as one of the strongest ingredients in the whole wonderful and beautiful thing.

To Lady Ella Santerre, who was very thoroughly a woman, this young man seemed to have been given into her hands to care for. The very well-spring of her nature was self-sacrifice, and if so much has not been shown already she has been ill-drawn indeed. But here her sense of self-sacrifice became an intense and sacred joy. All figures of speech apart, she would have died to have made Jack happy, and she had no room left in her nature for any coyness, real or pretended. She was prouder and happier to take him than any words could say, and mere worldly considerations were so apart that in the presence of her love he might have been an emperor and have loved her

just as well, and it would have made no tittle or jot of difference in her joy and pride. And though women be taught never so carefully the sinfulness of nature, and the advantages of wealth and station, the best of them will go back to nature after all, if you give them but half a chance, and will lead happy natural lives, to the infinite blessedness of their husbands and of the children who shall hereafter remember a mother who was like an angel, and whose mere memory seems to make all other women sacred.

"It seems a selfish and cruel thing," said Jack, still holding her hand, and looking at her with a sort of yearning remorsefulness.

"To see you happy will make me happy always," she answered. "If you were disposed to sit down idly here at home, and do nothing, it would be a selfish and cruel thing."

And keenly as Jack Clare felt about the matter, he saw nothing else for it but expatriation. He had high hope about the New Zealand scheme, and was full of thoughts of the family that might be founded in that distant land.

"Can we try it, darling?" he asked, after another lengthy silence. "We are safe against monetary loss, I think, because there is nothing I have sent out there, or bought out there, which will not realise all it cost me. And if we find the life dull or unhappy we can come home again, with but little time lost, for we are both young as yet, and can cast ourselves upon the stream of English life again."

"Are you afraid of your own happiness there?" she asked.

"I?" asked Jack, with a bright wonder in his eyes. "With you?"

"I can trust my own," she said.

All this conversation was necessarily carried on in the lowest possible tone, and this sweet declaration was spoken in a whisper. She leaned forward a little as she made it, and Jack was leaning forward also, so that her lovely blushing face was close to his. He knelt softly and noiselessly beside her and drew the blushing face nearer to his own. She yielded to him and he kissed her on the lips and eyes, and then when he placed both arms about her she yielded still, and allowed her head to rest upon his shoulder.

"Whither thou goest," she whispered, "I will go."

"I shall be glad," said Jack Clare that same afternoon, "if you can give me a little of your time." He spoke to Windgall, who noticed that he looked a trifle pale.

"More trouble," said his lordship inwardly. His experiences had taught him to forebode trouble. "What is in the wind now? . . . Certainly, Clare," he answered aloud. "I was just about to take a stroll and a smoke. Shall we talk outside?"

"As you please," said Clare, and they sallied into the park together.

"I have been thinking over what you were good enough to say to me some weeks ago," Jack began, and then broke down for a minute.

"About your future?" said his lordship.

"Yes," Jack assented.

"Well," said Windgall, "I talked the matter over with your brother Montacute a day or two later, when I met him in town. He agreed with me that if you could be brought to be quiet about your own political predilections, that between us we might do something. He promised to write to you."

"He wrote," answered Clare.

"And you replied to him?"

"Yes. I told him how sorry I was to disappoint him—how sorry I was to disappoint you both. But I can't help it, now. I can't do it. I should be a scoundrel if I did it."

"Well, well," said my lord, somewhat impatiently, "and what do you propose to do?"

"You know, I think, sir," answered Jack slowly, "that I have bought land in New Zealand."

"Well," said Windgall, "it's not likely to have fallen greatly in value. You can easily find a purchaser. I gather from the Emigration Reports, that there is rather a rush to New Zealand just now, and that land is selling rapidly."

"I have been speaking seriously with Ella," said the youngster with a beating heart, "and we have decided that it will be better not to sell it. We have been trying to face our future seriously and unromantically, and we both see how little chance there is of finding an honourable and lucrative career in England——"

"Great Heaven!" cried his lordship, facing suddenly round. "Don't let me think that I am talking to a madman, Clare."

"I will give you no need to think that, sir, if I can help it," answered Clare a little stiffly. "I knew I should probably have to encounter some opposition on your part, but I trusted, and I still trust, that you will not make it insurmountable." The Earl walked on with a step which revealed his annoyance plainly, but as yet he said nothing, and the young man proceeded. "Since you did me the honour to set me on my

present footing, I have thought every day and almost every hour of every day about this question. I can see no single way, sir, for an honourable ambition to fulfil itself in England."

"Do you mean to tell me, Clare," cried Windgall, wheeling round again, "that you have ever for a moment seriously contemplated the possibility of taking my daughter out to New Zealand!"

His indignation and amazement were so real and apparent that the young man was abashed for a minute, and seemed himself to recognise a certain positive enormity in the scheme. But a little reflection brought him back to where he had always been since this scheme had begun to be a part of his thoughts. Rightly or wrongly he could see no room for himself in old England, and a hand that would scarcely be denied seemed to beckon him to the new country.

"Suppose, sir," he ventured to say at last, "that we permit an experiment to be experimental. You were so kind as to offer Lady Ella a certain dower. If we go to New Zealand we shall not need that, and if you were still disposed to bestow it, it might be allowed to lie by and increase."

"I decline," said the Earl, mightily stiff and majestic, "to entertain the scheme at all. When I wrote to you as I did, I naturally expected that you would be prepared to avail yourself of such assistance as your friends might be able to afford you. I certainly never expected to be confronted by any such hare-brained proposal as this. I decline utterly and completely to entertain the idea at all. Utterly and completely," he added with angry emphasis, "utterly and completely."

"Better men than I, sir, have already embarked in colonial enterprises," said Jack gloomily.

"No doubt," cried Windgall angrily. "And you, sir, may follow the example of your betters when you choose, but you will not take my daughter with you."

He had not liked Clare for a long time, and in his heart he had been sore at the fact that he was compelled to recall him. This proposal afforded him the first opportunity he had ever had for giving vent to his anger, and for the moment he rejoiced in it, more than a little. But then came cool reflection, and with it the memory of the truth that this time he had really sold his daughter—though he had sold her to the man she loved, he had sold her none the less—for Kimberley's ninety-thousand pounds.

The walk, which did not extend far, was concluded in silence, and the two men parted in silence. Windgall was so angry that he found it hard work to leave the theme alone, and was on the

very edge of further speech about it a hundred times. He had scarcely re-entered the house when he met Ella.

"My—my dear," he began with anything but a face and a voice of affection, "what is this nonsense Clare has been talking of—this precious emigration scheme of his?"

"Papa," said the girl, "I shall be sorry to leave you, but it will be for the best. Captain Clare is right. England is not a good place for younger sons."

"Are you both mad together?" cried the tormented nobleman, but his daughter's look brought him to the consideration that he was no longer free to express himself with the emphasis and directness he had lately employed. "Really," he went on with a manner considerably modified, "I have no wish to take a tone like that, but I don't know what to make of this amazing proposal."

"But why is the proposal so amazing?" she asked him. "We have talked it over quite seriously, and we both think it for the best."

Windgall's restraint upon himself was unequal to the anger this speech inspired.

"Let me hear no more of this," he said wrathfully. "I—I won't endure it. If I had dreamed that Clare could have brought such a plan to me, and that you would endorse it, I—I——"

His wrath brought him to a standstill.

"I am sorry you think so ill of it," said Ella quietly.

"And what does that mean?" cried her father. She was silent. "Does it mean that my will is to be defied? Does it mean that this ridiculous project is to disgrace me in the eyes of all the world? that my daughter is to marry an emigrant as if I were an Irish cottar?"

He walked up and down the room fuming. Ella had never seen him so abandoned to anger, and he had never spoken to her in such a voice before.

"I am very sorry indeed, papa," she said again.

"Will you kindly tell me," he said, stopping in his excited walk and facing her, "what that reiterated phrase may mean? I don't want your sorrow, Ella. I want your obedience."

Nothing more unfortunate for himself could have been conceived than those two last angry phrases, and he had no sooner uttered them than he framed a retort for himself, which, if Ella had spoken it, would have crushed him. Had he not had enough of both already? She had given him sorrow with obedience these four years.

"I beg your pardon, my dear," he said. "I spoke hastily. I beg your pardon. No man ever had a better daughter. I had no right to speak so. I beg your pardon."

"Pray say no more, dear," she answered him, with an arm about his neck. "Let us talk of this quietly, and if it is not for the best we will not go."

My lord was bitterly dejected all the evening, and next day he went over to Gallowbay and laid the matter before Mr. Begg, who really seemed but little surprised by the proposal, though Windgall tried to make it look as amazing as he could.

"It will be a great grief to part with Lady Ella," said Mr. Begg sympathetically. "But in these days of rapid communication (it is only a matter of a month or thereabouts) it would be easy to see her often. And there is a great career open out there for energy and enterprise, my lord. There is an aristocracy there, of a sort, already. In a hundred years there will be a genuine aristocracy, great families, great estates. It is a fine country, my lord, a fine country."

These opinions crushed his lordship without in the least softening his distaste.

"But," said he, by-and-by, "there is such a thing as public opinion at home."

"If your lordship does me the honour to ask my opinion on that matter," said Mr. Begg (and Windgall nodded to signify that he wanted an opinion), "I believe that enlightened public opinion will applaud the young gentleman's choice and the lady's courage. I am a devout believer in the future of the British colonies. And I do not suppose, my lord," concluded Mr. Begg, with something which, in an elderly lawyer, amounted almost to enthusiasm, "I do not suppose that anywhere in the world the son and daughter of English noblemen would meet with more social consideration than in the English colonies. They will have no social rivals, and there will be no social positions the colony can bestow which will not be open to the son of Lord Montacute and the son-in-law of the Earl of Windgall."

Now all this did considerably soften my lord's distaste, and indeed he had made such a pother to begin with that he had almost exhausted opposition by carrying it too far. When Ella had brought him to a final conversion, he began to talk about the thing with complacency, and to anticipate the objections of his friends he adopted Mr. Begg's arguments, and spoke of Jack Clare as if he were a sort of missionary of aristocracy going out to inoculate colonial folk.

This sudden and unexpected conversion was brought about quite naturally, however abrupt it may seem, for Windgall saw clearly that Ella meant to abide by Captain Clare, and that she would not have yielded him up again for a wilderness of fathers.

So in due time all the magnates connected with both houses, whether by ties of kindred or friendship, were gathered together, and the Honourable John George Alaric Fitz Adington Clare and the Lady Ella Louisa Santerre were bound together in the ties of holy matrimony with much pomp and all the customary signs of rejoicing. The purposed emigration was not hidden, but was proclaimed, as it were, from the housetops, and not only did the speakers allude to it at the wedding breakfast, but the newspapers made a considerable fanfaronade about it, and set it out as the beginning of a new era in the history of the colonisation of the British possessions, so that the Honourable Jack and Lady Ella were familiar in the mouths of New Zealand folk a week or two before they saw their new home, and were received on their arrival with great hospitality and consideration.

AN EPILOGUE.

In the height of the season of the year 1882 Mr. Bolsover Kimberley attired himself one evening in the plain black and white which is the distinguishing sign of gentlemen, nobodies, and waiters. It was a Wednesday evening, and he was bound to a great dinner in a fashionable square. He wore no blazing solitaire in his shirt-front, but three very small studs of gold. There was not a ring upon his fingers, and a plain ribbon of black silk served him in lieu of watch-chain. For some years past it had been a matter of general observation that, for a millionnaire and a *nouveau riche*, Mr. Kimberley was curiously quiet in his dress. For a long time after that terrible scene in the King's Avenue his discarded finery had made his body servant glorious, and there was still a small safe in Kimberley's bed-room in which reposed a remarkable assortment of rings and chains and pins, none of which for many a day had seen daylight or gaslight as an accessory of Kimberley's attire.

He was dressed on this particular evening much earlier than he need have been, and his manner was marked by a certain nervous anxiety. He looked often at his watch, and finally,

the evening being beautifully clear and warm, set out on foot somewhat before the necessary time. Arriving early at the great house in the fashionable square he was received with considerable distinction, and passed from one to another with shy salutations. Almost immediately following upon his own entry came a broad-shouldered and stately gentleman of something over thirty, with grey eyes and a great auburn beard, and with him a lady of singular beauty, some four or five years younger. With these, a grey man, slight and spare, who, observing Kimberley, crossed over to him instantly and shook hands with great warmth.

"You have met Clare already, I understand?" he said.

"Twice or thrice," replied Kimberley.

The bearded man crossed over a moment later bringing the lady with him.

Kimberley shook hands with both and the four formed a group together.

"You must let me congratulate you on your maiden speech," said Kimberley to the bearded man. "I have heard it spoken of everywhere."

"Oh!" said the other, "when you praise my speeches you laud her ladyship. She makes the bullets and I fire them."

"Ah," said the grey man bending over the lady, "Clare tells me that you have become a mighty politician, Ella."

"That is Jack's nonsense, papa," said she in a voice rippled with laughter.

"The plain truth of the matter is," declared the bearded man with an admiring smile at her, "that Ella should be in the House herself. If she were there your lordship would learn a thing or two. How well you are looking, Kimberley. Better, even, than four years ago."

"But the colonies beat us all," said Kimberley with shy mirthfulness. "New Zealand has made quite a giant of you."

At this point came a lady to the group.

"My dear Ella, I called this afternoon and was dreadfully disappointed to find you away. But I insisted upon seeing the children, and oh, what darlings they both are. I believe little Alaric knew me again, though he was but three when I first saw him. He came to me and kissed me at once, and dragged me off to see the new rocking-horse, which had just arrived."

"The new rocking-horse?" said Ella.

Kimberley blushed and looked conscious.

"Really, Kimberley," cried Clare, "you'll spoil the children. Kimberley's face betrays him, my dear. Mr. Kimberley is the

ogre of our household, Lady Caramel. He has emptied the Lowther Arcade into the nursery, and the little rascals speak disrespectfully of Santa Claus because of him. 'I don't care about Santa Claus,' said the four-year-old this morning, when I threatened him with the loss of the old gentleman's favour. 'Mr. Kimberley is better than Santa Claus.'"

"I am very fond of children," says the little man, "and it is such a pleasure to please them." He has not yet lost all his shyness, but it is no longer marked enough to make anybody uncomfortable.

By-and-by Ella turns to speak to him, and with her he talks with no embarrassment, and with no pain. Has the weak heart forgotten the love that once broke it? No. That is not for gotten, or forgettable, but Ella is a sort of angel to him—a Madonna. He will never love again, never marry, but he is by no means unhappy or solitary or burdened with regrets. There broods upon the past a chastened twilight. His sorrows made her happiness, and he is quite contented. When, four years before this time, Ella and her husband spent four or five months in England, his name was heard on the lips of Ella's boy almost as often as the nurse's. He loved to meet the child in the parks and to play with him at home or to guide the three-year-old feet across the lawn at Shouldershott, and he was allowed to have his way. The second boy was born in England, and Kimberley was his god-father. Now again, after a second acquaintance of a month long, the elder boy has learned a second time to love him, and his godson has learned that easy lesson for the first time. He goes into the nursery as if he were a godmother instead of a godfather. It is the greatest joy of his harmless and benevolent life to be with the children, and again they let him have his way.

And so even Kimberley's romance has reached a happy close. He is happier than he could have been if he had never discovered Ella's grief, and he has the heart to know it. He is grateful in his inmost soul to have known the truth in time.

The feast is over. It is near midnight, and there are new people in the splendid rooms. Amongst them a distinguished Parisian journalist and a Londoner of the same profession, a bantam-like little man the latter, with upright self-assertive hair, keen eyes of no depth, and the promise of a double chin.

"Who is the man," asks the Parisian, "with the great beard of chatain clair? I forget how you call it in English."

"Sweet auburn," says Mr. Amelia; "loveliest colour of the plain."

"Plaît-il?" from the Parisian.

"Nothing," responds the little man with a transient air of shame. "That is Lord Clare, the last of the new batch of peers, created in acknowledgment of his services in respect to emigration."

"And the splendid woman?" asks the Parisian. "His wife. No. He is too attentive."

"Yes. His wife. By no means ill-looking."

"Ill-looking. Was Venus ill-looking?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," says Mr. Amelia. "Our Mutual Friend is less black than he's painted, and Venus was probably a good deal plainer. Everbody exaggerates."

"The little man? He is not of the beau monde? Who is he?"

"A parvenu," responds Mr. Amelia with a high-bred air. "I remember the fellow years ago. He came into a fortune of a million and a quarter sterling—nearly forty million of francs—think of it!—when he was a lawyer's clerk."

"And the aristocracy admit him to intimacy?"

"Delighted to know money here," says the little man in his own crisp way. "At one time he was engaged to be married to the lady you compare with Venus. He threw her over, a little damaged, and the other man married her. Now the poor devil seems to have returned to his allegiance, and you see how they fawn on him. The new peer is as poor as Job, and everybody says the little snob will leave his money to my lord's children."

"And so they make much of him? Well, that is natural. It is the way of the world."

Profoundest gratitude and sincerest friendship and tenderest love. It was the way of the world to taint them all with that base fancy. But it was the way of the world to own them all, gratitude and friendship and love.

The ways of the world are various and many. And along them travel all sorts of people. Very dark grey, indeed—almost black, some of them—middling grey, light grey, and here and there a figure that shines with a pure white radiance

THE END.

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